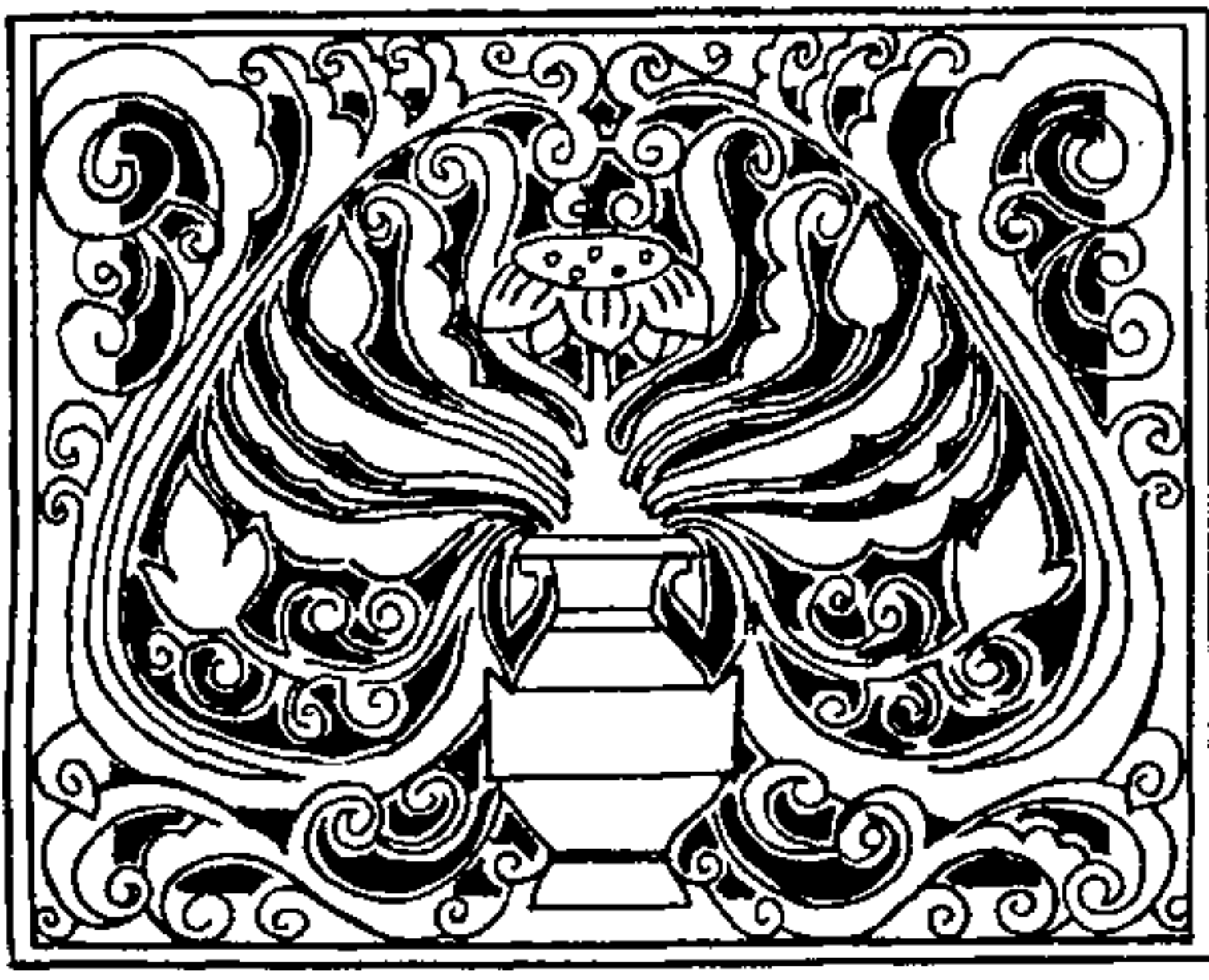




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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JULY 1997

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 102

JULY 1997

No. 7

Divine Wisdom

DETAILS OF THE PATH OF DEVOTION

(Sage Kapila to his Mother Devahūti)

आध्यात्मिकानुश्रवणान्नामसङ्कीर्तनाच्च मे।
आर्जवेनार्यसङ्गेन निरहङ्क्रियया तथा॥

The Scriptures should be heard and studied continuously. My names and deeds should be heard and glorified. Straightforwardness and a selfless attitude should be cultivated. The company of holy men should be sought.

मद्धर्मणो गुणैरेतैः परिसंशुद्ध आशयः।
पुरुषस्याञ्जसाभ्येति श्रुतमात्रगुणं हि माम्॥

A man who practises these spiritual disciplines, making the attainment of God-

love the sole object of his life, will gain absolute purity of mind, as a result of which he will have the capacity to constantly remember Me with delight and to be absorbed in Me.

यथा वातरथो घ्राणमावृङ्क्ते गन्ध आशयात्।
एवं योगरतं चेत आत्मानमविकारि यत्॥

As the fragrance carried by the wind swiftly reaches the organ of smell, so the mind freed from worldliness by the disciplines of devotion, learns to go effortlessly to the Supreme Being.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.29.18-20

Ramakrishna Movement: Ideas and Ideals-I

Today the Ramakrishna Movement is recognized all over the world. But a little over a hundred years ago its existence was hardly perceptible. Swamiji himself remarked in a letter to Mr. E.T. Sturdy dated 9 August 1895 that a great change had occurred even during his lifetime. He could get fifty thousand to participate in the birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna whereas ten years before then he could hardly find 100.¹ So rapidly has the Movement become popular. No doubt, the spread is because of the unseen hand of Sri Ramakrishna and the spiritual potency of the Order.

Over a period of a hundred years, the ideals for which the Holy Trio (Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda) stood tend to get faded in human vision. The lure of the senses and the greed for possessions dim human sight and he tends to lose his grip on spiritual and moral values. It is necessary therefore to repeat and reiterate all these values over again so that the impression lingers and bears fruit in our own lives. Some of the ideals we are about to discuss were carried to such extremes in the life of these embodiments of purity and selfless love that it may fill us with awe. But on that account we should never lower the ideal set by the Holy Trio but, knowing the levels of perfection to which these ideals can be lived, we should strive ever and anon to rise to that level of perfection even if it be by setting before us lesser ideals which are within our reach, and raising these ideals so that we

gradually attain to the highest perfection in those ideals.

We have, in the institutions run by the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, apart from monks and brahmacharins, lay devotees, lay admirers and well-wishers, and lay persons. Most of the devotees have made the Holy Trio their ideal. Admirers and well-wishers have grown a fascination for the activities of the Movement for reasons they themselves may not be able to explain very cogently. It may be assumed that all of these persons are drawn into the current of the Movement by the invisible hand of God. In working out the huge-scale operations of the Movement oftentimes one has to take the help of lay persons who are classed neither as devotees, nor as admirers nor as well-wishers. From the point of ideals which the Order represents, these people may not be quite aware of what the spiritual organization is engaged in. In the absence of a clear understanding that those associated with a spiritual organization must aspire for spiritual rewards which the Divine bestows, people tend to equate their services with those of their counterparts in secular organizations. It is necessary to understand that those working in a spiritual organization are head and shoulders above those working in secular organizations. For, the former work in silence, in secret and receive their rewards in the open; they aim at spiritual progress with not so keen an eye on worldly gains; their aim is not to do work but to perform worshipful service. This is what is called *Karma-Yoga-sādhana* and failing to see the subtle but significant difference, ideological differences soon begin to surface revealing the persistent self-seeking tendency. For

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 8, p. 348.

secular gains one must take recourse no doubt to secular organizations; for peace, love of God and such other spiritual gifts one must take refuge in the ideology behind a spiritual organization though secular gains follow as a by-product.

To better equip oneself in the fight against the natural enemies of man called the *Ṣaḍ-ripu* (the six enemies: Lust, Anger, Greed, Delusion, Intoxication and Envy) one has to repeatedly read the lives of those who were untouched by these enemies and whose lives are a glowing example of how one should live in this world: with the hand to the work at hand, and the mind merged in God. That is the ideal and we must strive to attain to it, for, when we come to that stage in life when work loses its hold on us then we shall be able to live wholly in God and, giving up this mortal frame with the thought of the Divine uppermost in our minds, we shall attain that form of Liberation which corresponds to our disposition.

A common remonstrance against living ideal lives is that it is not possible *in* the world. But a little thinking will reveal that living an ideal life may not be compatible with worldly gains, but it is not true that such a life is impossible. Take Sri Ramakrishna's father, for example. He could have given false witness to lead a secure life in his village; however, he invited the wrath of the landlord by refusing to yield to untruth and had to lose all his earthly belongings. That was a wise choice because he got in return that wealth which no worldly man can ever get—Gadadhar, the Incarnation of the Age. **To live up to these noble ideals is tantamount to losing things of the world but then one is vouchsafed the divine attainments.** All that we do indicate what we want and whether we are prepared to pay the price for receiving the prize.

Love of Truth

Truthfulness is a great virtue. Every child is taught to speak the truth. And the

child is also taught not to tell an unpleasant truth. By reading the life of Sri Ramakrishna we find that he was established in truth. It cannot be said that he was always pleasant in uttering truth; however, it was always motivated by the welfare of the person concerned.² *Satyam, priyam, hitam*—truthfulness, being pleasant and welfare are three considerations. People may give differing emphasis between being pleasant and being attentive to welfare, but the emphasis on truth is never lessened.³ One can never attain God, the embodiment of Truth, by giving up truth. Sri Ramakrishna says:

It is said that truthfulness alone constitutes the spiritual discipline of the Kali Yuga. If a man clings tenaciously to truth, he ultimately realizes God. Without this regard for truth, one gradually loses everything.⁴

Even as a boy Sri Ramakrishna was wonderful. Born in an orthodox brahmin

2. 'सुलभाः पुरुषा राजन् सततं प्रियवादिनः। अप्रियस्य तु पथ्यस्य वक्ता श्रोता च दुर्लभः॥ O King! Common indeed are persons who always speak that which is pleasing; but rare indeed is he who will speak that which is not pleasing, but good, and rare too is he who will hear it'—words uttered by both Mārīca and Vibhīṣaṇa to King Rāvaṇa in the *Araṇya* and *Yuddha Kāṇḍas* vide *Vidyasagara Vidyavacaspati Prof. R.P.S. Sastri, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* (Madras: G.A. Natesan & Co., 1935), pp. 200 and 336.

3. The Holy Mother always discouraged speaking an unpleasant truth because it eventually makes the speaker rude. The stand is further justified because Rāvaṇa did not listen to the sane advice either of Mārīca or of Vibhīṣaṇa. Indeed, rare is the person who listens to an unpleasant truth; on the contrary such advice only incurs wrath in many instances.

4. Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 312. [Hereafter, *Gospel*].

family which was rigid in the observance of caste rules, Ramakrishna's love for truth showed itself unmistakably on the occasion of his investiture with the sacred thread. He took his first *bhiksha* (alms) from the hands of a low-caste woman, notwithstanding all remonstrances from his elder brother, who acted as his guardian, just because he had given her word earlier to that effect. Citing instances when such practices are allowed in Brahmin families and giving due respect to the sentiments of the young boy, Dharmadas Laha who was a friend of the family and greatly respected, settled the matter in Sri Ramakrishna's favour.⁵

While there are many other instances of his strong adherence to truth a few should be mentioned because love of truth, in today's world, is in short supply. We come to the time of Sri Ramakrishna's sadhana. He prayed to the Divine Mother offering to Her every pair of duality in exchange for pure Love and Devotion to Her. But he could not offer to her Truth and untruth saying, 'Here is Truth, here is untruth, take them both and give me pure Devotion for you.' Explaining his standpoint Sri Ramakrishna said, 'If I give up truthfulness in this way, how can I keep the truth that I have offered everything to the Mother of the universe?'⁶ By holding on to truth Sri Ramakrishna was, on the one hand, giving up untruth and on the other holding firmly to the Divine which is Truth itself.

Very truthful Sri Ramakrishna was, to the extent that Truth held on to him, as it were. So firmly was he established in Truth that he used to say laying emphasis on the need to adhere to truth, 'Truthfulness in speech is the tapasya of the Kaliyuga. It is

difficult to practise other austerities in this cycle,'⁷ and 'Truthfulness alone is the spiritual discipline in the Kaliyuga.'⁸ Religious life becomes so simple by holding on to just this one virtue—Truth, in thought, word, and deed.

Frank and Bold

Sri Ramakrishna was very outspoken. His words and his thought tallied. He did not cherish one thought in his mind and concealing it speak out ideas which contradicted his views. Sourindra Tagore had been conferred the title 'Raja' by the Government of British India. One day Sri Ramakrishna went with Captain to see Sourindra Tagore. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna met him, he said, 'I can't address you as Raja or by any such title, for I should be telling a lie.'⁹ Blunt utterance it was, but it came straight from the heart, for indeed Sourindra Tagore was not a king of an independent territory. When Jatindra, an aristocrat of Calcutta came to the garden of Jadu Mallick one day, he said in reply to a question asked by Sri Ramakrishna that even King Yudhisthira had to have the vision of hell. Sri Ramakrishna firmly replied, not caring for the listener's aristocracy, 'What sort of a man are you? Of all the incidents of Yudhisthira's life, you remember only his seeing hell. You don't remember his truthfulness, his forbearance, his patience, his discrimination, his dispassion, his devotion to God.' Had not Hriday stopped his mouth, he would have said much more to the embarrassment of his listener.¹⁰

One day Rani Rasmani went to the temple of Bhavatarini to worship and pay her obeisance to the Divine Mother. Even as she was engaged in these services, she was thinking of the possible success or failure in a law-suit instead of being absorbed in the

5. Translated by Swami Jagadananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970), pp. 54–5. [Hereafter, *Great Master*].

6. *Great Master*, p. 356.

7. *Gospel*, p. 749.

8. *Gospel*, p. 177.

9. *Gospel*, p. 119.

10. *Gospel*, pp. 118–19.

worship. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting there and singing songs addressed to the Divine Mother at the request of the Rani. The Master, in ecstasy, understood the state of the Rani's mind and intending to teach her to abstain from worldly thoughts while engaged in the worship of the Divine, struck her tender person, saying, "That thought even here!" That was uttering truth frankly and boldly to a person of no small worldly status or influence purely from consideration of her welfare. The result was that the Rani became repentant and her devotion to Sri Ramakrishna increased all the more.¹¹ A similar thing happened another day at a bathing-ghat of the Ganges at Baranagore, when in a state of divine intoxication, Sri Ramakrishna saw Jaya Mukherjee repeating the name of God, his mind on something else, and slapped him twice on the cheeks.¹²

Strong Discrimination and Highly Analytical Thinking

Another feature unique to the mind of Sri Ramakrishna is his strong discrimination coupled with an analytical bent of mind. By dint of this trait of his, Sri Ramakrishna clearly saw that the goal of human life is God-realization. This perception reflected in all his activities and influenced strongly his mode of thinking. Seeing in intellectual knowledge only a means of earning livelihood, he was opposed to it. That did not give way to idleness but resulted in the attempt to gain that knowledge which destroys ignorance, that light which dispels once for ever darkness, that knowing which all else is known, that obtaining which there never more arises in the mind any seeking. This determination formed the secret of his zeal for spiritual practices.

His analytical mind perceived that man who is divine would have clung to God had it not been for the weight of worldliness

which therefore was the deadliest of foes to be conquered. He reduced the countless forms in which world-attachment shows itself into mainly two: lust and lucre. He also saw that once these were conquered, there were yet other obstacles such as, love of name and fame, and the persistent ego, and he did not fail to point it out later in life to spiritual aspirants who came to him.

Conquest of Lucre

It is well known how, taking in one hand a lump of clay and in the other a piece of coin, Sri Ramakrishna addressed his mind saying over and over again, 'rupee—earth, earth—rupee' and threw them both into the Ganges. Elaborating on the thinking process involved Swami Virajananda says:

This is silver and this is clay; by the one you can build huge temples and palaces and feed hundreds of men and animals, ride in carriages drawn by horses and supply all the wants of the body; by the other also you can make bricks and tiles and the beautiful shapes of statues and so on, but what is either of these for except the enjoyment of the senses? Both being matter, they never take one beyond it. Being themselves finite they never lead one to the Infinite. Why do you vainly hanker after such? Let them both be the same to you.¹³

As a result of this renunciation of lucre, his mind and body acted in unison repulsively to the idea of contact with even metal objects. A coin had been placed under the mattress during his absence. When he came to sit on it, the very touch with the bed was like the sting of a scorpion. He became very upset if anyone offered him money or even mentioned such a proposal. Even in the matter of performing worship in the temple what stood in the way at the beginning was that he would have to take charge of the

11. *Great Master*, pp. 149–50.

12. *Gospel*, p. 119.

13. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1902, p. 150.

ornaments on the deity. Once suitable arrangements were made for the care of the ornaments, he agreed to perform the worship. Not merely were lucre and metal objects given up, even the possession of worldly belongings became impossible for him.

Once Mathur Babu, assuming he would pass away earlier than Sri Ramakrishna, wished to make some provision for the efficient continuance of service to him. Being sharply rebuked for even suggesting it, Mathur Babu made a request to Sri Ramakrishna's old mother, who was then living, to accept something from him if she considered him to be her own. She replied, 'My child, ...through your affectionate care, I lack nothing at present. When I require anything, I'll ask you for it.' Then, opening her portmanteau, she said, 'I have so many clothes and through your loving care I have no trouble about food and drink. You have arranged and are arranging everything; what then shall I ask of you?' However, Mathur Babu was adamant. At last she said, 'If you must give me something, please buy an anna worth of tobacco leaf, for I want tobacco ashes for cleansing my teeth.' Mathur Babu was surprised to hear this and said, 'Can any mother other than you give birth to such a self-denying son!'¹⁴

A related incident in the life of the Holy Mother is pertinent:

...the Pamban island, as also the Rameshwara temple, was under the administrative control of the Raja of Ramnad who was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He had instructed the temple staff by telegram that as the guru [actually the divine consort, Sri Sarada Devi] of his guru would be visiting the shrine, all facilities should be offered to her. As a consequence, the Holy Mother and her party were taken to the *sanctum sanctorum*, contrary to the general custom,

and were allowed to worship the uncovered Siva image to their heart's content with Ganges water, flowers, etc.... The temple staff had been instructed by the Raja to show the temple jewellery to the Mother and present her any piece that she might ask for. When the Raja's wishes were communicated to the Mother she was at a loss to think out what she might really be in need of; and so she said after a pause, 'What can I need? Whatever was necessary has been arranged for by Sashi.' And then it struck her that such a refusal might offend them; and hence she corrected herself, 'Well, if Radhu has any need of anything, she will take it.' And to Radhu she said, 'See, if you can choose anything you might have need of.' The Mother said so out of courtesy; but when the treasury was opened and the gems and diamonds glittered up, her [Holy Mother's] heart began to throb and she kept on praying, 'Master, may not Radhu have any temptation.' The Master heard her [prayer]. After looking at everything, Radhu said, 'What is there worth taking from all this stuff? I don't want any of these. I have lost my writing pencil; buy one for me.' At this the Mother was immensely relieved and came out to purchase from a roadside shop a pencil worth half an anna.¹⁵

How sensitive was Sri Ramakrishna to what might appear trivial to common minds! On one occasion he bade goodbye to Sambhuchandra Mallick of Calcutta and then remembered that Sambhu had advised him to take some opium as a remedy against stomach troubles. Coming back to the house and finding that Sambhu had gone into the inner apartment, he took some opium from

14. *Great Master*, p. 244.

15. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977), p. 245.

the manager and started to return to Rani Rasmani's garden. As he had received the opium from the manager without the knowledge of Sambhu it amounted to stealing. So he could not see the way that led to Rasmani's garden though he could clearly see the road that led to Sambhu's house. On returning to Sambhu's house he did not find the manager and so he threw the opium through the window of his house saying, 'Hullo, here is your opium'. This time he had no difficulty in returning to Rasmani's garden.

Conquest of Lust

That lust was a great barrier in the path of spirituality Sri Ramakrishna understood without studying its effect even on worldly life. He had not to read about the fall of nations as a result of weakness with regard to sex. The skin-deep glitter of the body had to yield before his scrutinizing discrimination and it revealed the human body as but a cage of bones and other disgusting things such as flesh, marrow, skin, blood, etc. Seeing in the relation of a child to its mother a relation so pure and high, so unselfish and ennobling, so innocent and sweet, and so one-pointed and dependent, Sri Ramakrishna found in it the unique way to escape from carnal passion. He looked upon all women, chaste or unchaste, respectable or of disrepute, as the manifestation of the Divine Mother. He could not see even his own wife in any other light.

He got over the idea that he was possessed of a masculine body by performing sadhana as the handmaid of the Divine Mother, dressing himself in a woman's attire. No wonder, he could imitate perfectly the mannerisms of womenfolk to the accompaniment of roars of side-splitting laughter from those present. Thus he transcended both the masculine body idea associated with his male body and the feminine body idea associated with women.

Conquest of Ego

From birth man labours under 'eight bondages': of hatred, fear, shame, aversion, egotism, vanity, pride of noble descent, and obsession with formal good conduct. Not only did Sri Ramakrishna renounce these bondages mentally but he did renounce them also physically. To mention just a few examples, we refer to his cleaning with his own hands the place which is absolutely shunned as unclean by others to destroy vanity born of noble descent, and to his removing the sacred thread indicative of his being born a brahmin at the time of meditation in the Panchavati at Dakshineswar in the stillness of the night.

Egotism that springs up like the *aswattha* is difficult to root out. Sri Ramakrishna saw that this ego had its existence and support in ignorance only, and that it was only with the advent of Knowledge that the craze for 'me and mine' gives place to 'Thee and Thine' when one takes to the devotional path, or it leaves its cosy narrow cell and spreads itself into the Universal Self, the Immense I, or the ripe 'I' as he used to refer to it, when one takes to the path of Jñāna. His mastery was so perfect that he could not use the 'first person singular or first person possessive singular' when speaking of himself. He would use such expressions as 'This body', 'Mother wishes' and 'Do come here' instead of saying 'My body', 'I would' and 'Do come to me'.

Sri Ramakrishna shunned name and fame. For this reason he held that the way of performance of rites prescribed by the scriptures was a difficult path in the Kali Yuga when hankering for name and fame creeps in unawares. He said to Sambhu Mallick, 'You may think you have no motive behind your work, but perhaps there has already grown a desire for name and fame and the advertising of your name.'¹⁶ This idea he also communicated to Pratap Chandra

16. *Gospel*, p. 671.

Mazumdar saying, 'You may think you are working in a detached spirit, but attachment creeps into the mind from nobody knows where. You may worship in the temple or arrange a grand religious festival or feed many poor and starving people. You may think you have done all this without hankering after the results. But unknown to yourself the desire for name and fame has somehow crept into your mind.'¹⁷

Even meditation could yield name and fame! Pointing to Keshab seated in meditation and motionless like a log, Sri Ramakrishna observed, 'Because of that power of meditation he achieved what he wanted—name and fame, and so forth—, through the grace of God.'¹⁸ Once Keshab Chandra Sen asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'Why do I not see God?' To this Sri Ramakrishna replied revealingly, 'You do not see God because you busy yourself with such things as name and fame and scholarship.'¹⁹ That name and fame creep in slowly, unnoticed is to be borne in mind, for that obstructs the vision of God. As for Sri Ramakrishna himself, the three words, 'Master, Teacher and Father' pricked him like thorns. He would say that God is the Master; He is the Teacher, and He again is the Father of His creation.²⁰

One day Trailokya Babu, the son of Mathur Babu, became annoyed with Hriday, the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, and ordered him to leave the temple. In his rage, he gave an indication to others that Sri Ramakrishna also need not stay at the temple any longer. On hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna, who was held in high esteem, placing the towel on his shoulders and smiling, was about to leave the place. He had gone almost to the gate when afraid that evil may befall him, Trailokya Babu came up to him and requested him to come back. Sri Rama-

krishna bereft of ego also came back smiling and entered his room as though nothing had happened.²¹

Forbearance

The lives of the Holy Trio is a living demonstration in forbearance. While many examples can be cited from the lives of each of the great ones, just two examples from the life of Sri Ramakrishna will substantiate what we want to say.

Halдар, the Kalighat priest of Mathur Babu, seeing Mathur's firm devotion to Sri Ramakrishna, became jealous of him. He felt convinced that Sri Ramakrishna had used some magical powers to capture the heart and mind of Mathur Babu. Just before dusk one day, the Master was lying in a divine semi-conscious state in Mathur's Janbazar house. As the Master's ecstasy was about to come to an end, Halдар happened to come in too. He approached Sri Ramakrishna, and pushing about his holy person, said, 'O Brahmin, tell me how have you made him [Mathur] subservient to you?...' Receiving no reply from Sri Ramakrishna who was in a semi-conscious state, Halдар went to the extent of kicking him in anger. Sri Ramakrishna forbore it all and did not mention this to Mathur till the priest was dismissed from service for some other offence committed by him.²²

Sri Ramakrishna was served with great care by Hriday, his nephew. Yet he had to leave Dakshineswar and the holy company of the Master under unfortunate circumstances. On 26 October 1884 he came to Jadu Mallick's garden and from there sent word to Sri Ramakrishna that he would like to see him. Sri Ramakrishna who was talking with a group of devotees, the day being a Sunday, went out briefly in the company of 'M.' to see Hriday. At the sight of the Master,

(continued on page 560)

17. *Gospel*, p. 452.

18. *Gospel*, p. 605.

19. *Gospel*, p. 614.

20. *Gospel*, p. 633.

21. *Great Master*, p. 618.

22. *Great Master*, pp. 436-8.

Ramakrishna Mission, The Trail-Blazer

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, in this message on the eve of the centenary celebrations of the Ramakrishna Mission, explains the meaning of service. He also recapitulates how Sri Ramakrishna inspired Swami Vivekananda to set up a Sangha for the temporal and spiritual well-being of humankind and how Swamiji responded to that call. Revered Maharaj says that 'so long as human civilization will last, the lamp of service of the Ramakrishna Mission will keep on burning for the good of all irrespective of caste, creed and religion.'

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna and of Swami Vivekananda is an epoch-making event in the annals of human civilization. Their lives and message are not meant for a single country, nation, or a particular society; they are for the well-being of the whole world. Their ideas and life-giving message will surely show the way of redemption whenever human civilization will be at its peril, whenever it will go down the path of destruction by ignoring spirituality. They come to the world from time to time to cater to the needs of a particular age, and their entire life is dedicated to the welfare of others.

The history of the 19th century India is a history of despondency and frustration on the one hand, and on the other, it is marked by the glimmer of a new awakening. There was a time when social life was marred by the lack of faith in religion, disrespect to its own culture, shameless imitation of everything western, and, of course, in many other ways. Efforts were made by various social organizations and religious groups to stem the tide of this degradation and unite the younger generations. Sri Ramakrishna appeared at this juncture when the country was tossed and swayed by the conflicting waves of faith and disbelief accompanied by the coming into existence of reform movements of various descriptions. His religious thoughts and attitude, and his

remarkable life of austerity and renunciation, moved the enlightened sections of the society, especially the English-educated youth of Bengal.

Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual revelations not only found place in the sermons of the Brahmo leaders such as Keshab Chandra Sen but also created in them a new awareness. Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda) and a group of young men who had a yearning to realize God and who at last discovered in Sri Ramakrishna a living fountain of spirituality that could quench their thirst for the divine, originally belonged to the Brahmo Samaj.

Swami Vivekananda's arrival at Dakshineswar at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna is one of the most significant events in Indian History. It was a wonderful encounter between the ancient and the modern. Sri Ramakrishna represented ancient India, while modern India, thoroughly influenced by western education and values, was represented by Narendranath who went from pillar to post to find an answer to the eternal question—Does God really exist?

Narendranath asked Sri Ramakrishna: 'Have you seen God?' Prompt came Sri Ramakrishna's simple yet firm reply: 'Yes, I have. And I can show God to you too, if you want.' Narendranath was charmed by this unambiguous answer. He felt he had at last found the man he had so long been searching for. The

two souls recognized each other. Sri Ramakrishna, during the very first encounter, understood who Narendranath was and why he had come into this world. Narendranath, however, took time to realize the true identity of Sri Ramakrishna.

As Vivekananda tested his guru, so did Sri Ramakrishna test his disciple and mould him in a fashion so that the latter could retain his unalloyed purity and remain spotless. Narendranath, however, did not surrender himself readily to his guru. However, he had eventually to surrender to Sri Ramakrishna's divine love. Later in life Swami Vivekananda said of Sri Ramakrishna, 'He was LOVE personified.' Indeed, he captured Narendra with the golden net of his ambrosial love and entrusted to him the great responsibility of setting up the Sangha in future.

Sri Ramakrishna practised different spiritual disciplines and traversed many religious paths in such an impeccable way that his life turned out to be a synthesis, a splendid symphony of all religions. And in order to distribute the pearls of his spiritual realization among all, he searched for a fit receptacle. He found such a receptacle in Narendranath to whom he transmitted all his powers to be used for the well-being of the suffering humanity. Sri Ramakrishna thus expressed himself in a new way, through a new form.

Narendranath at first tried to resist Sri Ramakrishna for he did not much like the idea of work and all that. He wanted to remain ever absorbed in the bliss of *samadhi*. But Sri Ramakrishna reproached him by saying: 'I thought you will be like a huge banyan tree under the shade of which the weary, tired, and suffering wayfarers will come in thousands for rest, eternal peace and joy. Far from it, you want to be selfish, you want to be happy with your own liberation.'

Narendranath's eyes were thus opened and Sri Ramakrishna engaged him in the service of the *jiva*. He assured Narendranath that there is a far higher state than the attainment

of *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Narendranath discovered a new truth, the secret of a new religion, as it were. He was now able to see Vedanta in a new light which he later propounded as 'Practical Vedanta'.

Once Narendranath heard Sri Ramakrishna say in a divine mood: 'Serve *Jiva* as Shiva'. Many disciples of the Master were present that day and heard this cryptic statement. But besides Narendranath none could realize what the Master had in mind. He understood the purport and said in a hushed voice, 'If God permits, I shall preach this new gospel everywhere'.

Narendranath set up the Math at Baranagore shortly after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna. Surendranath Mitra, Sri Ramakrishna's householder devotee, provided the finance. Shortly after this, nine 'inner-circle' devotees or associates of the Master including Narendra took the vow of renunciation at Antpur, the birth place of Baburam (later Swami Premananda), and later, they took formal *sannyasa* as per the injunctions of the scriptures. Narendranath still felt restless; he could not make out how the noble task conferred on him by Sri Ramakrishna was to be carried out. There was no such possibility, he thought, in the foreseeable future. But as he began to travel the length and breadth of India as a wandering monk and became deeply acquainted with its soul, the means to regenerate the nation flashed in his mind. At Kanyakumari he saw in meditation the perennial heritage of Mother India and it was there that he chalked out his plan to fulfil the mission of Sri Ramakrishna.

The first step in fulfilling this mission was his participation in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and thereby moulded the spiritual thinking of the West. Swamiji knew well that the secret of success of the Buddhist Sangha lay in its organized action. While in the West, he was equally charmed by the united and concerted endeavours of its people. Therefore, through letters he repeatedly urged his brother

disciples to work conjointly in India. He gave similar calls to Alasinga Perumal and other devotees and admirers in south India, and inspired them to sacrifice their life in the service of man-god. Later, some of his brother disciples expressed their doubts over Swamiji's plan to serve the suffering humanity as a form of worship. Holy Mother's clear-cut verdict, however, removed all their doubts and misgivings. She said, 'Naren is the instrument of Thakur. Naren is preaching the ideal of service only because Thakur wants his all-renouncing children and devotees to work for the good of the world.'

Swamiji's extensive travel in India and in the West convinced him that 'no great work can be done without an effective organization'. Hence, on returning to Calcutta from the West, he convened a meeting of brother-monks, devotees and admirers of Sri Ramakrishna on 1 May 1897 at the house of Balaram Basu at Baghbazar. He explained in his fiery language the necessity and utility of an organization and then said:

This Association will bear the name of him in whose name we have become sannyasis; him, taking whom as your ideal you are leading the householder life in the field of activity—this Samsara (this world); him whose holy name, and the influence of whose unique life and teachings, have within twelve years of his demise spread in such an unthought-of way both in the East and the West. Let this Sangha (Organization) therefore be named the Ramakrishna Mission. We are but the servants of the Master. May you all help in this work!

When this proposal of Swamiji was endorsed by Girish Chandra Ghosh and other senior devotees and monks, the meeting re-

solved to set up the 'Ramakrishna Mission'. The Ramakrishna Mission thus came into being on the now historic May Day with 'Liberation of the self and good of the world' as its motto. For a religious organization it was nothing short of a unique commitment. On this very day Swamiji referred to Holy Mother Sarada Devi as the 'Sangha Janani' or the Mother of the Order. He said: 'Sri Sri Ma [Holy Mother] is the saviour and sustainer of the Sangha that we are going to set up today; she is the Mother of the organization.'¹

In fact, after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother wept and prayed much to the Master so that his all-renouncing children could have a place to settle and live an intense spiritual life. Ramakrishna Sangha is the result of that soulful prayer of the Mother.

A few days after the establishment of the Mission, that is on 5 May 1897, the second meeting of the Mission was convened. The meeting, after discussion, adopted the aims and objects of the Mission and its methods of action. So far as the aim of the Sangha was concerned, it was decided that it would 'preach those truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement.'

The meeting also resolved that day 'to conduct in the right spirit the activities of the movement inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.'

And the Mission's method of action, it was decided, would be '(a) to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses; (b) to promote and encourage arts and industries; and (c) to introduce and spread among the

1. Words of Swami Vivekananda as heard by Swami Saradananda and reproduced by Swami Ishanananda in the *Udbodhan*, B.S. 1370, p. 201.

people in general Vedantic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Needless to say, this programme of the Mission has been translated into action over the years and its scope has widely expanded today. Within India, the Mission's special task was to set up ashramas in different parts of the country, preach Vedantic religion and educate the masses, while outside India, it sought to send trained members of the Order to start centres there for the preaching of Vedanta and Indian culture so as to bring the East and the West closer. Swamiji categorically said that the aims and the ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics. On 4 May 1909, the Ramakrishna Mission became a registered society and Swami Brahmananda was elected its President.

It has to be borne in mind that Swamiji's ideal of service is different from dry social work. This ideal has a far greater significance which many could not understand at the beginning when the Mission started functioning. Even the monks of other denominations in India looked down upon the ideal of service. What they failed to appreciate is that service does not mean just giving away food and clothes and doling out some money to the poor and the needy. Service becomes real worship when we are selfless. And only that kind of service will purify our mind and liberate us, and we shall be able to realize that God is the indwelling spirit in us all. We have to remember that it is a great privilege that the Lord has given us the opportunity to serve others. If we remember this and serve even one single person, in all humility and with deep reverence, without being prompted by ego and arrogance, our life will be blessed. This is the sum and substance of the dictum—'Serve *jiva* as Shiva'. Swami Vivekananda has set before us a unique example by synthesizing the two ideals, namely, the liberation of the self and doing good to the world. These two ideals

threaded into an inseparable whole are being increasingly appreciated by all who, in all sincerity, are trying to practise them.

Today the Ramakrishna Mission has spread itself as a giant banyan tree with its branches and offshoots operating in many parts of the world. Nourished by the prayer of the Holy Mother, consolidated by the fire of renunciation and austerity of the associates of Sri Ramakrishna, and enlivened by the spiritual ideals of the Master, the Mission today has struck deep roots everywhere. Its activities have stirred the inner world of man outside India. It has also revolutionized the attitude of Indian sannyasins. The catholicity and universal ideals of the Mission have equally impressed the Western intelligentsia as well as the different sections of the Indian society. In areas such as providing relief, service, mass-education, technical education, awakening of women, setting up a Math for women, promoting village and tribal welfare, agricultural development through scientific methods, translating scriptures such as the Upanishads into different languages, providing medical aid and, lastly, bridging the gap between the East and the West, the Ramakrishna Mission has done pioneering work. Many organizations in India and elsewhere have sprung up today which are the direct results of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission based on Practical Vedanta.

The Ramakrishna Mission is celebrating its centenary today. But during the past one hundred years it had to wage many a battle and weather many a storm. Nevertheless, the lamp of new awakening that was lighted by Swami Vivekananda at Balaram Basu's house in 1897 is burning steadily and radiating its glow throughout the globe. This light has brought forth a new consciousness and blazes a trail in the realm of spirituality that aims at liberation. So long as human civilization will last, the lamp of service of the Ramakrishna Mission will keep on burning for the good of all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. □

The Ramakrishna Movement in Madras

A Hundred Years

SWAMI SHIVAPRASADANANDA

The recent celebrations of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's homecoming in 1897 are ample proof of the recognition of the spiritual greatness of Swami Vivekananda by the enthusiastic people of South India. This also speaks volumes for the public appreciation of the work of the Ramakrishna Movement pioneered by another illustrious disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Ramakrishnananda. In tracing the development of the missionary work in the South, one cannot but recall fond memories of the great disciples and followers of Swami Vivekananda who caught the fire of Swamiji and laid down their lives in the service of the Master, putting into practice his mandate to the people of the nation. We earnestly believe that today, fifty years after Indian independence, this report will once more be an occasion to recollect the lofty and bold message of Swami Vivekananda which inspired many youths to lay down even their very lives for the freedom of the nation—an outward expression of the individual's inward struggle for gaining freedom from ignorance.

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A depiction of the history of the Ramakrishna Movement in Madras (Chennai), in all its growth and glory would be a daunting if not forbidding venture, if it were not also enticing. So many-faceted, and woven into the hearts of generations of followers of the Ramakrishna Movement is the story of the Math, that one could hardly expect to grasp it entirely. Suffice it to say that the more one thinks about it in a spirit of detachment, the greater will be his joy. What the pen cannot fathom, perhaps the spirit may grasp. One will be amazed at the grace of the supreme Lord who assumed the *trimūrti-yukta* form as Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and through Swami Ramakrishnananda, the beloved Shashi Maharaj, blessed the city of Chennai with the founding of the Ramakrishna Math in 1897.

Wandering alone and penniless as a

begging monk after the *mahasamadhi* of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda had left Calcutta in December 1889 and travelled, mostly on foot, through northern and western India, stopping to pass a few days or weeks in towns, village or capitals. In mid-1892, he turned his footsteps from Junagadh, in Gujarat, southward, reaching finally the land's end at Kanyakumari in December 1892. The wonderful saga could be given in detail how Swamiji swam to the last rock of the Indian subcontinent and meditated there, visualizing the nation's past glories, present problems and future greatness. It was a turning point in his life and a great moment for us to ponder over.¹

From Kanyakumari he turned towards the north, on foot as was his wont in those

1. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern and Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita

days, reaching via Rameshwaram, Madurai and Pondicherry, Madras City. His devoted travelling companion from Madurai wrote to a friend in Mysore about the wonderful monk who was accompanying him, and the two were met in Madras by a group of distinguished young men of the city. As it turned out, these young men became Swami Vivekananda's disciples and remained forever his devoted and loyal workers.²

Madras made a great discovery in Vivekananda in early 1893. People found in him a versatile genius, a man of action and a man of spiritual knowledge. Conversant in so many intellectual, scientific and cultural disciplines—music, art, philosophy, history and religion—, and endowed with spiritual realization, his personality towered over everyone. Fluent in both English and Sanskrit, he was an amazement. Further, he always spoke boldly and with authority, yet he was humble. His thrilling musical voice and songs, strength of soul, power of intellect, luminous and ready replies to all kinds of enquiries, his scintillating wit, epigrams and eloquence, literally held people rivetted to their places. As the days passed, the purity of the Swami's character, his deep patriotism and effulgence of soul attracted people from all over the city to meet and converse with him. His host, Manmathanath Bhattacharya, noted that every day the number of his visitors increased.³ No wonder then that the Raja of Ramnad at Rameshwaram had already identified Vivekananda as the fittest man to represent India at the upcoming Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago and urged him to go to America..

The Ramakrishna Movement in Madras centred in Swami Vivekananda at the beginning, for he was the cynosure of all eyes, a man of destiny who knew that he was born with a divine purpose and mission.

Ashrama, 1979) vol. 1, pp. 340–6. [Hereafter, *Life*].

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 364.

What were Swamiji's qualifications? Sister Nivedita, one of his biographers, wrote of the things that predominantly went into the make-up of his character: the blessings of his Guru, the learning he had acquired from a deep and thorough study of the scriptures, command over the English language, sound understanding of western science and philosophy, and the intimate knowledge he acquired of his own people by his years of itineracy as a monk living with all strata, castes and classes of Indian society. A 'disciple' of his wrote in the *Brahmavadin*:

... 'His whole heart and soul was the burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name.' He held in his hand all that was fundamental, organic, vital; he knew the secret springs of life. There was fire in his breast, which entered into him with the comprehension of essential truths, the result of spiritual illumination. His great mind saw a connection where others saw only isolated facts: his mind pierced the soul of things and presented facts in their real order. His was the universal mind, with a perfect practical culture. What better equipment could one have who was to represent... India in its entirety—Vedic and Vedantic, Buddhist and Jaina, Shaivic and Vaishnavic, and even Mohammedan?⁴

By the time Swamiji was ready to leave for the West, having won the heart and loyalty of some of the best young men of Madras, he effected a strong beginning of the great work that was to follow in the South. So much so, that for nearly four years activity went on apace in Madras, while he him-

4. Quoted in the *History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), pp. 61–2. [Hereafter, *History*].

self worked hard in the United States and Europe. In Madras, meetings and societies were organized, two English journals, the *Brahmavadin* and the *Prabuddha Bharata*, were started, and both Swami Vivekananda's and Sri Ramakrishna's name began to spread far and wide due to their attractive and novel ideas on how religion could be made more applicable and practical in modern life. It was these ideas of the man Vivekananda that enthralled people as much as the virile beauty and attractiveness of his person. The same Vivekananda now giving a shake to the city of Madras would soon journey to Chicago and talk to the people of America in similar flaming words of spirit

'Sisters and Brothers of America,' he addressed them! 'Children of immortal bliss,' he called them! 'What a sweet, what a hopeful name,' he continued; 'allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners.'⁵ As he roused Madras, so he also roused the American mind. The whole world discovered his greatness, and the impression created was so deep that people began to have faith again, both in India and the West. Both in the West and in the East, therefore, on two fronts, Swami Vivekananda began his epic struggle. In the *History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, Swami Gambhirananda writes:

Hinduism had to be raised from the morass of passivity, disintegration and self-complacency, and placed on the path of dynamic progress. Vivekananda was up in arms, almost single-handed, against a sea of opposition. He had no money, he was not well understood, and his following had to be won over and

consolidated. But the indomitable and undaunted leader was not to be discouraged. He had taken up the cross and must shed the last drop of his blood for the good of humanity, come what might.⁶

When the news of Swamiji's popularity and success in America began to trickle in, the author notes, so far as the mental attitude of the nation [India] was concerned, it was turned overnight from one of despondence to youthful buoyancy.

The effect of Swami Vivekananda's success was tremendous. In a word, India was awakened, never to sleep again, though she had still to be started on the way to a new successful career of spiritual and social rejuvenation. The Indian public literally devoured every quotation from the Swami and all reports of his unparalleled triumph. The people of Madras and Bengal were transported with joy, the papers and journals were full of Vivekananda, and large and influential meetings were held to draft congratulations to the redeemer of the Hindu faith and the vindicator of his nation's prestige. Of these meetings, those in Madras and Calcutta were most noteworthy....

As for the brotherhood at Alambazar (Calcutta), their elation knew no bounds. Had not the Master prophesied, 'Naren shall shake the world to its foundation.'⁷

Swamiji kept in continuous touch with his disciples in Madras and brother monks in Calcutta. From 1893 to 1896 his voluminous correspondence brought tremendous inspiration to everybody. And well it should, for all along he had said, his great purpose was to build up the character of men and women, both in India and in the

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 11. [Hereafter, C.W.].

6. *History*, p. 85.

7. *Ibid.*

West, to put India on her feet again in the comity of nations, and to give a turn to the thought currents of the whole world. He wrote to his people in India to hold fast to the ideals of the ancient rishis, and scatter broadcast, as had never been done before, the man-making, character-building ideas of the Vedanta, the *Gita* and the Upanishads. Fear none, he said, but give and take with all, sharing freely with other nations and, difficult though it may be, sharing Sanskrit culture between the so-called higher and lower castes.

For India to recover her lost glory, she must follow her own spiritual path or *svadharma*, but there would have to be corrections and adjustments to take care of previous lapses. Now, a greater emphasis should be placed on unity and harmony and cooperation among followers of all religious sects to enable them to face unitedly the soulless materialistic force of evil in the world. New emphasis would have to be given in India to spreading the Sanskrit language and culture to give dignity and equality to the people. By learning the secret of work—by organizing, accumulating strength, and practising mutual cooperation—, society would have to be lifted up. All this was his special message to his Madras followers.

With a far-reaching and clarion call, Swamiji maintained that the first step should be in agreeing that the basic theme of life is religion which takes people to God—to have direct experience or perception of God. 'Religion is realization,' he said. Vivekananda gave the mandate: People *should* dare to see God, *realize* the identity of their own soul (Atman) with the supreme Soul, and proclaim this fundamental redeeming Truth to the world. By common agreement, Sri Ramakrishna is without peer and the greatest representative of India's spiritual ideals and aspirations, both ancient and modern. Therefore, around his name everyone should rally.

Most inspirational for the young men of Madras was the fact that Swamiji reminded them continuously of the infinite faith he had in them and the great work in store for them. He told them they had to flood the land with spirituality, and both they and he knew, full well, that in order to carry out that mandate, the Madras followers would have to become veritable lions (*Vedanta Kesaris*) fitting themselves for the task! The following are excerpts taken from his letters and speeches holding up the Ramakrishna ideal and exhorting them to plunge into the work of nation-building in an organized way:

From the day Sri Ramakrishna was born dates the growth of modern India and of the Golden Age. And you are the agents to bring about this Golden Age. To work, with this conviction of heart!...Once more He has come to help His children, once more the opportunity is given to rise to fallen India. India can only rise by sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna.⁸ You will know everything by degrees....Was Sri Ramakrishna the Saviour of India merely? It is this narrow idea that has brought about India's ruin, and her welfare is an impossibility so long as this is not rooted out....⁹ Another point, it was no new truth that Ramakrishna Paramahansa came to preach, though his advent brought the old truths to light. In other words, he was the embodiment of all the past religious thoughts of India...¹⁰, an extraordinary searchlight under whose illumination one is able to really understand the whole scope of Hindu religion. He was the object-lesson of all the theoretical knowledge given in the Shastras (scriptures). He showed by his life what

8. C.W., vol. 6, pp. 318, 281.

9. Ibid., p. 331.

10. Ibid., p. 311.

the Rishis and Avataras really wanted to teach. The books were theories, he was the realization. This man had in fifty-one years lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life and so raised himself to be an object-lesson for future generations.¹¹

Not only India, but the world outside, is expecting great things of us....Onward, my lads! The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, not in magic, mummmery, and charlatanism, but in the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion—of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the time has come. Have faith that you are all, my brave lads, born to do great things! Let not the barks of puppies frighten you—no, not even the thunderbolts of heaven—but stand up and work!...Be courageous. Do not try to lead your brethren, but serve them. The brutal mania for leading has sunk many a great ship in the waters of life. Take care especially of that, i.e. be unselfish even unto death, and work.¹²

Every nation must save itself; we must not depend upon funds from America for the revival of Hinduism, for that is a delusion. To have a centre is a great thing; try to secure such a place in a large town like Madras, and go on radiating a living force in all directions....¹³

My child, what I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. Strength, manhood, Kshatra-Virya + Brahma-Teja. Our beautiful hopeful boys—they have everything, only if they are not slaughtered by the millions at the

altar of this brutality they call marriage. O Lord, hear my wails! Madras will then awake when at least one hundred of its very heart's blood, in the form of its educated young men, will stand aside from the world, gird their loins, and be ready to fight the battle of truth, marching on from country to country. One blow struck outside of India is equal to a hundred thousand struck within. Well, all will come if the Lord wills it.¹⁴

The work we want—we do not seek wealth, name or fame....Where are the men in Madras who will give up the world to preach religion? Worldliness and realization of God cannot go together....¹⁵ I had always great hopes for Madras, and still I have the firm belief that from Madras will come the spiritual wave that will deluge India....¹⁶

In Madras and Bombay I have lots of men who are after my heart. They are learned and understand everything. Moreover they are kind-hearted and can therefore appreciate the philanthropic spirit.¹⁷

An organized society is wanted. Let Shashi look to the household management,... Make a permanent centre.... Do you see my point?...If you can build a Math, I shall say you are heroes; otherwise you are nothing. Consult the Madras people when you work. They have a great capacity for work....Work in unison with the people of Madras and let someone or other amongst you go there at intervals.¹⁸ The Calcutta Math is the main centre; the members of all other branches must act in unity and conformity with the rules of that centre.¹⁹

11. C.W., vol. 5, p. 53.

12. Ibid., pp. 43, 36.

13. Ibid., p. 61.

14. Ibid., pp. 117–18.

15. Ibid., pp. 61, 81.

16. C.W., vol. 6, p. 280.

17. Ibid., p. 312.

18. Ibid., pp. 316, 330.

19. C.W., vol. 5, p. 79.

The work against evil is more educational than actual, however big we may talk. This, first of all, is the idea of work against evil; and it ought to make us calmer, it ought to take fanaticism out of our blood.²⁰ All the Shastras hold that the threefold misery that there is in this world is not natural, hence it is removable. In the Buddha Incarnation the Lord says that the root of the *Ādhibhautika* misery, or misery arising from other terrestrial beings, is the formation of *classes* (*Jāti*); in other words, every form of class-distinction, whether based on birth, or acquirements, or wealth is at the bottom of this misery....²¹

If you are really my children, you will fear nothing, stop at nothing. You will be like lions. We must rouse India and the whole world. No cowardice. I will take no nay. Do you understand? Be true unto death! . . . The secret of this is *Guru-Bhakti*—faith in the Guru unto death! Have you that? I believe with all my heart that you have, and you know that I have confidence in you—so go to work. You must succeed. My prayers and benedictions follow every step you take. Work in harmony. Be patient with everybody. Every one has my love. I am watching you. Onward! Onward! This is just the beginning....Expand your hearts and hopes, as wide as the world. Study Sanskrit, especially the three *Bhāshyas* (commentaries) on the *Vedānta*....²² It is culture that withstands shocks, not a simple mass of knowledge....There must come culture into the blood. We all know in modern times of nations which have masses of knowledge, but what of them? They are like tigers, they are like savages, because culture is not there. Knowledge is only skin-deep, as civilization is, and a

little scratch brings out the old savage....The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes. That done, you have what you want.²³

Swamiji stayed in the West for nearly four years. When he returned to India in January 1897, a new second-life started for the Ramakrishna Movement in South India. India then included Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and when Swamiji arrived in Colombo on 15 January 1897, the entire subcontinent rose as one man to receive him and accord him a hearty welcome. The national scene beggared description. The celebrations following one upon another in city after city as Swamiji made his way northward were truly stupendous. Not even for royalty in Madras' history had such a joyous enthusiasm of the people ever been seen. After the passage of a century, the event is still fresh in the mind as evidenced in the enthusiastic response of the people during this year's celebration of the centenary both in Sri Lanka and in South India.

After great national rejoicing and three weeks of intense activity, Swamiji reached Madras on 6 February. Here a tremendous welcome and ovation was accorded to him lasting nine days, during which time he delivered his five famous memorable speeches to the public and innumerable lesser ones in public gatherings and among visitors or earnest questioners or learned pundits. Needless to say, all this gave the Madras work a great fillip. Departing Madras by ship on 15 February for Calcutta, he arrived there on the 19th, and after a few days sent Swami Ramakrishnananda (Shashi Maharaj) to Madras to fulfil the promise he had made to the Madras followers saying, 'I will send you one for the work who is more orthodox than your most orthodox brahmins, and more

20. C.W., vol. 3, p. 214.

21. C.W., vol. 6, p. 327.

22. C.W., vol. 5, pp. 61-2.

23. C.W., vol. 3, p. 291.

learned than your pundits.' Shashi Maharaj arrived in March 1893.

Among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who renounced the world to become sannyasins in the holy Order, Shashi Maharaj was a priceless gem. Endowed with a strong body and intelligence, Shashi was a brilliant student and a good sportsman in his youth. Born in 1863, the same year as Swami Vivekananda, he had, over and above his exceptional talents in his boyhood, a deep and consuming interest in religion and put into practice the precepts he learned from his pious parents. He was the embodiment of such virtues as calmness and self-control, control of sense organs, mental purity, and continence (*brahmacharya*). His biographers do not give many details of his boyhood, but it seems he was outstanding in many ways. Sarat Chandra was his cousin and he too became a sannyasin. Shashi's burning desire for moral purity both of mind and body were remarkable, so naturally he was very acute mentally. Whatever he applied his mind to do, he could accomplish. Even as a youth he was an adept in meditation on God.

In short, like the other boy-disciples of the Master, Shashi was possessed of perfect character. His zeal in his service of the Master was wonderful during the latter's lifetime, and even when the Master passed away, Shashi's devotion never wavered, but he carefully kept and protected Sri Ramakrishna's photograph and personal effects, regarding in those things the Master's living presence. His brother disciples were amazed, not to mention other people, to see that Shashi never left Sri Ramakrishna's daily worship unattended, even for a day during the next twelve long years. The world has yet to understand what a happy and blessed experience it is to practise such one-pointed devotion and absolute renunciation. In the evenings when the worship of Sri Ramakrishna in the photograph was accompanied by music and waving of lights,

Shashi Maharaj would be carried away by divine fervour and in a thundering voice repeat, 'Jai Guru!', 'Victory to the Guru!', 'Sri Guru', 'Blessed Guru Deva!' A younger monk, Swami Virajananda, described it: 'As if in the *Tāṇḍava Śiva* mood, beside himself with emotion... what a thrill of spiritual fervour it was.'²⁴ Another, a devotee, wrote: 'He seemed the embodiment of rhythmic prayer, the spirit of worship incarnate.'²⁵

Swami Ramakrishnananda was second only to Swamiji in the brotherhood in his Sanskrit scholarship and knowledge of Hindu and world scriptures. Besides, his mastery of English and orthodox life style made him preeminently the choice of Swamiji for the Madras work. Such was the perfect rapport between Shashi Maharaj and Swamiji that when the latter requested him to come away from Calcutta, Shashi Maharaj immediately agreed, even though there was a world of difference between the life to which he was accustomed and the variegated work he would have to do from then on in the role of a lecturer, a teacher, a guru, a tenderer of aid to the poor, a fundraiser, and a missionary of the highest philosophy which formed the basis of the Ramakrishna Movement!

Shashi Maharaj's arrival in Madras signalled the start of rapid progress all over the South towards creating a new consciousness in India and a revitalizing of popular Hindu dharma. On his arrival in Madras, he and Swami Sadananda (a disciple of Swami Vivekananda) were met by Alasinga Perumal, Dr. Nanjunda Rao and others of the old circle of Swamiji's disciples.

The first location of the Madras Ashrama was on the Ice House Road, near

24. *Vedanta Kesari*, August 1972, p. 313.

25. Swami Tapasyananda, *Swami Ramakrishnananda, The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna to the South* (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1972), p. 49. [Hereafter, *Swami Ramakrishnananda*].

Castle Kernan on the Marina Beach. Within a short time, at the instance of the proprietor Mr. Biligiri Iyengar, the Ashrama was moved into Castle Kernan itself where Shashi Maharaj began conducting *Gita* and Vedanta classes both here and in other parts of the city. The work rapidly expanded and spread the name and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna all over, and the Math got more and more public recognition and support. At great personal sacrifice Shashi Maharaj poured his heart out to people, conducting classes, feeding and clothing the needy, organizing grand worship festivals with *puja*, *kirtan* and *bhajan* on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday and other holy days. Besides his heavy schedule of scriptural classes at the Math, Shashi Maharaj also lectured in many other cultural and religious associations of the city, like the Aryan Association, the Young Men's Hindu Association, and the Triplicane Literary Society. In time, numerous books of his collected lectures began to be published. In time also, Shashi Maharaj acted as host to many of the direct disciples of the Master, his *gurubhais*, when they came to Madras to inaugurate various departments of the work, or to open new facilities like the orphanage, schools and others. Most memorable was the visit to the Madras Math by the Holy Mother in January 1910 which will be forever remembered in the annals of the Math's history. Holy Mother, Swami Brahmananda and Swami Shivananda in particular blessed the Madras work profusely and gave their holy *darshan* to thousands.²⁶

Another type of work that Shashi Maharaj initiated had the most far-reaching influence and consequences, and that was the taking care of orphans and poor students of Madras. Starting in a very modest way, Shashi Maharaj and two of his workers, Ramaswamy and Ramanujachari, by all the

means at their disposal collected support and started an orphanage under the name 'Students' Home'. Protection and education was provided to a few poor boys and the institution grew in time to be one of the most important educational complexes in the city.²⁷ The *History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission* describes the beginning thus:

Swami Ramakrishnananda gave shelter to a poor boy suddenly orphaned by the plague. He told his assistants, Ramaswami and Ramanujachari, of his desire to find help for the poor students for whom he felt so much, and the young men persuaded their friends and relatives to help. Soon a small boarding house for students was started. Dr. Nanjunda Rao gave a small house for this purpose and the Home was established in 1905. The object of the institution was to give free board and lodging to poor boys and 'to secure for them the supervision and religious influence of the Swamis of the Math'. Its goal was man-making, based on spirituality, nationalism, scientific outlook, dignity of labour and other high qualities, as adumbrated by Swami Vivekananda. The Centre became recognized and appreciated all over the Madras Presidency for its extensive and fruitful activities.²⁸

Regarding the care, protection, and education of children, the best points of the ancient Indian *gurukula* system served as the model for the founders. This system consisted mainly in students living under the loving care of a teacher who looked after their all-round growth—spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical. There was this adjustment made in the modern context, however, that the fullest advantage could be had

27. Ibid., p. 51.

28. Cf. *History*, p. 137.

26. Ibid., pp. 77ff.

TABLE I. ACTIVITIES OF THE MATH AND MISSION CENTRES IN CHENNAI AT A GLANCE
(1995-1996)

Sri Rama-krishna Math, Chennai	1897	Library with a Children's Section	30,039 books, 295 newspapers and periodicals
		Three Monthly Journals	<i>The Vedanta Kesari</i> (English, 83rd year) <i>Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam</i> (Tamil, 76th year) <i>Sri Ramakrishna Prabha</i> (Telugu, 53rd year)
		Publication of Books	In English, Tamil and Telugu
		Charitable Allopathic Dispensary	Dental, Eye, ENT, Surgical, X-ray, Ultrasound Scanning, Paediatric, Gynaecology, Physiotherapy and Laboratory Sections with Clinics for TB and Diabetes Cases treated 2,09,100
		Weekly Mobile Dispensary	Cases treated 14,250
		A Primary School	734 pupils
		A Girls' High School	762 pupils
		Moral, Cultural and Religious Programmes for Children and Youth	
		Weekly Moral and Educational Classes for children in backward areas.	About 100 children
Rama-krishna Mission Students' Home	Started in 1905 and affiliated in 1918	Free Residential High School	185 boys
		Technical Institute	3-Year Diploma Course, Free Residential: 126 students A Post-Diploma Course in Automobile Engineering: 14 day scholars
		Free Hostel	21 college students
		Primary School	275 children
		Middle School at Malliankaranai	440 students, 29 boys in Free Hostel
		Library	3,333 books, 28 newspapers and periodical
Rama-krishna Mission Sarada Vidyalaya	1912	Two Higher Secondary Schools	5,400 girls
		Middle School	745 students
		Primary School	767 students
		Pre-Basic School	273 children
		Two Hostels	117 boarders
		Two Libraries	37,572 books, 11 newspapers and periodicals
Rama-krishna Mission Ashrama	1932	Three Higher Secondary Schools	3,116 boys
		Three Primary Schools	717 boys and 633 girls
		Hostel	59 boys
		Library	44,104 books

*Based on the General Report of
Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, March 1997*

when the boys could live together in a residential school.

The Students' Home came into being on its own with the help extended by the generous lay devotees in 1905 and was inaugurated in the presence of Swamis Brahmananda and Shivananda in 1918. It was a great achievement in those days and was the first and for many years the only time when the Mission accepted substantial help from the Government to build up a permanent institution. The *History* tells that the Students' Home was typical of the way in which educational institutions sprang up in the Mission during the time of the national upheaval. Later, this institution came to be called the **Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home**.

The Home in time spawned other institutions. A residential high school and a technical section each became independent institutions in the Tyagarayanagar part of the city and a students' hostel was added to these. These flourished so much that a separate Mission centre was established in 1948 under the name Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Schools, Tyagarayanagar, which is now known as **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama**.

Similarly, a humble beginning was made with a small 'Home for Widows' at Egmore started by Sister Subbalakshmi and her aunt Valambal Ammal as early as in 1912. The same year Sister Subbalakshmi started the Sarada Ladies' Union, and this inaugurated the Sarada Vidyalaya of Madras with twelve widows in a rented house at Triplicane in 1927. This institution too was integrated into the Mission in 1938. Boys' and girls' institutions extended their activities over the years to include various kinds

of night schools, primary schools, orphanages, and others all of which continue to this day with added strength and taken the shape of the **Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyalaya**.

In 1946 came up the Vivekananda College of Madras in which capable lay devotees 'eager to cooperate with the monks, actually managed the institutions. The results was a wonderful growth which the monks by themselves could scarcely have achieved.'²⁹ Today, this College is a part of the **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith** which has also a huge library and a hostel.

Shashi Maharaj became unwell in 1910 and passed away on 21 August 1911 with the name of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda on his lips. During his last days he was in a very blessed condition of mind and beheld the living forms of the Master, Holy Mother and Swamiji standing before him. Holy Mother blessed him at the end with a mystic vision. Though Shashi Maharaj's passing was a painful loss, the Madras movement, and the service to and of the people of Madras never slackened. Over the years Shashi Maharaj had had many able assistants among the sannyasins of the Order. They were Swamis Sadananda, Atmananda, Bodhananda, Achalananda, Paramananda, Sharvananda, Swaprakashananda, Dhyanananda and Madhavananda.³⁰ The Headquarters at Belur Math has never lacked distinguished sannyasins possessed of love, renunciation, and imagination to carry the banner forward. □

29. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

30. *Swami Ramakrishnananda*, p. 53.

The pure mind itself becomes the Guru. At times the mind is inclined to think of the divine forms. At other times the formless aspect of God appeals to it. The human Guru cannot always be accessible. As the aspirant goes on with his spiritual practices, his power of comprehension also increases. Then his mind can act as a guide.

—Swami Brahmananda, *The Eternal Companion*

Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Return to Calcutta—A Close Look

A brief report of the celebration of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's return to Calcutta held on the 19th, 23rd and 28th February, 1997 was given in the April 1997 issue of Prabuddha Bharata under the caption, 'A Report of the Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's Return to India'. A message, in Bengali, from Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Order, read out by Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj on 23rd February at the Deshbandhu Park, freely translated into English, was brought out in the June 1997 issue of this journal. We give below a fairly elaborate and soul-touching description of the functions held on the occasion with minimum of repetition based on reports of eye-witnesses.

From the beginning of January 1997, some of the Calcutta newspapers were reporting the news of how Chennai and other cities in South India had been celebrating the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's return to India. In addition, some newspapers, like the *Bartaman*, brought out two full page special insertions on the 12th and the 16th February 1997 giving details of the festive mood in Calcutta celebrating the Swami's homecoming a hundred years ago.

The Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Celebration Committee too had been publishing now and then the programme of the centenary celebrations to be held in Calcutta. Through the enthusiastic efforts of Messrs Karukrit, programmes were written in bold letters on big hoardings and erected at different places in the city and its suburbs. The Calcutta Municipal Corporation also publicized the programme through a few display boards. Messrs Karukrit together with Messrs Dutta, Messrs Steelmax and another who prefers to be anonymous, arranged for giving wide publicity to the programmes through giving insertions in newspapers, displaying banners, distributing about 35,000 handbills and arranging for broadcasting of the programmes through-

out the city and its suburbs by playing pre-recorded announcement from two decorated mobile vans. The Calcutta Doordarshan screened a 10-minute Bengali feature on Swami Vivekananda's return, two days prior to the celebrations, through the efforts of Dr. Gour Das of Vivekananda Swasthya Seva Sangha. The authorities of the Sealdah Railway Station too screened this repeatedly on their television thereby making the public aware of an important event that was about to take place soon.

Following chronology, it must be said that the Budge Budge Vivekananda Smarak Committee arranged a week long celebration from the 15th to 21st February to celebrate the occasion. On the 16th February the celebration was inaugurated by the Governor of West Bengal, Sri Raghunath Reddy, in a function where Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj acted as the Chief Guest. Sri Ganesh Ghosh, President of the Committee, gave the welcome address. The 18th February was devoted to a youth convention. The morning session was presided over by Swami Shivanathananda, and Sri Nachiketa Bharadwaj delivered a lecture. The evening session was presided over by Swami Purnatmananda (Editor, *Udbodhan*) and in this

meeting Sri Pranabesh Chakraborty, the well-known journalist, spoke.

19 February 1997

A century ago on the 19th February Swami Vivekananda had returned from the West to Calcutta passing through Sri Lanka and various cities in South India including Chennai. He had come aboard S.S. *Mombasa* of the B.I.N.S. Company and reached Budge Budge on the night of 18th February. Two representatives of the Calcutta Reception Committee met the Swami there and appraised him of the reception programme arranged in the Swami's honour. On 19 February, the Swami was brought to the Sealdah Station by a special train. This occasion was remembered solemnly this year on the same date. Thousands thronged in different places en route to have a view of the train and the portrait of the beloved Swami Vivekananda, the Patriot-Saint of India, braving the intense heat and bearing patiently the long delay of an hour. That is remarkable.

The Eastern Railway had announced the arrangement of a special train, which was called 'Vivekananda Special', departing from the new Budge Budge station on the 19th at 10.30 a.m. and reaching the Sealdah Station at 11.25 a.m. A bogey was decorated as a saloon car by the famous 'Kamala Decorators' under the supervision of a member of their team, Sri Tapan Roy. It had been decided earlier that after the decoration of the interior at Sealdah the train would leave the siding and arrive at Budge Budge in time to depart therefrom at 10.30 a.m. towards Sealdah. Unfortunately, due to absence of power in the overhead line, the train came to a grinding halt near Brace Bridge delaying the train by about 40 minutes and, as a consequence, delaying other trains as well. An hour late, the train reached Budge Budge. Immediately on its arrival, the task of decorating the exterior of the train was started despite the delay. Posters displaying pic-

tures of Swamiji and his quotes, obtained by the courtesy of the Batanagar Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, were pasted on the outside of the train in all of its compartments. The front of the train displayed a beautifully decorated portrait of Swamiji and a banner, '*Punya-vāhan*' (The Sacred Conveyance). As is traditional in India, two pots (*Maṅgaḷ ghaṭ*) with mango leaves and plantain tree, symbolizing auspiciousness, were fixed. The back of the train also was decorated adequately. The work of decoration with flowers had been entrusted to Jātiya Puṣpa Bhāṇḍār of Budge Budge. A full size cut-out portrait of Swamiji, daintily decorated, was placed on a throne in the saloon car.

People from all directions without much care for norms or conventions, walked even on railway tracks towards the train that was to carry the portrait of Swamiji to Sealdah Station. Thousands had thronged already, and many aged persons from nearby villages too were eagerly coming to Budge Budge to witness the occasion. While all this was taking place at the new Budge Budge station, many had unfortunately assembled at the old Budge Budge station thinking that the train would leave from there as it did during Swamiji's time.

Many monks of the Order, nuns of the Sarada Math, dignitaries, friends, admirers and well-wishers, arriving at Budge Budge early in the morning, reached the new Budge Budge station after paying homage to the sacred memory of Swamiji at the different places associated with him: the Ghat where he landed, the old railway station where he boarded, the waiting room in the station where he had rested for a while. They too had been awaiting the arrival of the train. People became overwhelmed as the revised time for the departure of the train neared. Many aged persons said that they had never had the experience of witnessing such an occasion filled with many lofty and soul-stirring sentiments. Meanwhile, two bands of the State Police, notwithstanding

the crowd, circled the platform and singing tunes awakening national unity took position at the front, near the engine. A hundred ladies, all dressed in red bordered sari with conch in hand, took their place next. The platform became a sea of human heads.

Meanwhile, Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, after paying respectful homage to Swamiji at the places in Budge Budge associated with Swamiji, arrived and after offering a garland to Swamiji on his statue near the station, entered the platform and stood near the engine. It had been announced earlier that the compartment next to the engine was reserved for ladies; in the next compartment, the saloon car, Swamiji seated on the throne was to be accompanied by elderly monks and respectable persons; the next compartment was for the remaining monks, Press Reporters, Municipality Chairman, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and other invitees; the compartment following that was reserved for volunteers and devotees.

The guard and the driver of this special train were given mementos. Thereafter, in the presence of Sri R. Mohan Das (Manager of the Sealdah Railway Division), Sri Tarun Datta (the ex-Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal and the State Election Commissioner) gave the green signal. Simultaneously, there were loud claps, the band played the tune, *Dhana dhānye puspe bharā* (This, our Motherland, filled with wealth, granary and flowers), a hundred ladies blew the conches and others made the auspicious 'uloo' sound. The train started to move at approximately 11.35 a.m., an hour after the schedule time, and shortly thereafter came to a halt. Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj boarded the special compartment. Swamis Ramananda, Riddhananda, Umananda, Prabhananda, Akshayananda and other monks, Sri Tarun Datta, Sri R. Mohan Das, and Dr. Haimi Basu and Sri Ashok Dev (both Members of the Legis-

lative Assembly) boarded the train. Amidst loud shouts of rejoicing, the train started moving towards Sealdah.

While the train was scheduled to stop at only a few stations on the way, the exuberance of the people at different stations en route compelled the driver to stop the train so that people could offer respectful homage to the sacred memory of Swamiji. On the way to the Nangi station, it was seen that people had become so enthusiastic and eager to have a look inside the compartment that contained the portrait of Swamiji, that they had climbed the overbridge through which the train was to pass. The railway authorities repeatedly announced on the microphone that as it was unsafe to stand on the overbridge they should get down. As there was not space on the platform, people had also stationed themselves on the branches of trees to get a view, albeit from a distance. Many stood on the railway tracks holding in their hands photographs of Swamiji and banners. Students of the local schools, students of the Batanagar Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama's School, members of the Rotary Club, members of the Maheshatala Municipality, and many others from distant villages had gathered eagerly. As at Budge Budge station, bands played, conches were blown, bells and cymbals were struck and 'uloo' sound was made. Amidst all this Sri Subhash Mukhopadhyay, the Municipality Chairman of Maheshatala, boarded the train. The citizens of Maheshatala displayed the banner which read in Bengali, '*Jayatu Swamiji, Vivekananda Ki Jay, Victory to Swami Vivekananda*'. Even people as old as 96 years had come to offer homage to the illustrious son of India and felt immensely delighted and carried away to think that over this very land a hundred years ago Swamiji had passed on his return after the spiritual conquest of the West. At the Batanagar bridge hundreds had gathered in the upper floors of living quarters and rained flowers on the train as it passed by.

On reaching the Akada station, a similar sight was seen. Students of the Madarasa school, and thousands from the community of tailors and backward classes had congregated to offer their salutations to Swamiji. Md. Morsalin Mollah (Member of the Legislative Assembly) boarded the train. As the train was about to enter Santoshpur, there was displayed yet another form of offering one's respects. Students, young and old, stood class-wise in the open field and, striking cymbals, blowing conches and making 'uloo' sound, stood as the train passed by. At the station itself, under the supervision of Srimati Gita Naha, the handicapped students of 'Rūpāyaṇ', carrying the banner reading in Bengali 'Victory to Vivekananda', stood on one side of the platform offering their respects. Students of the Shyama-prasad Vidyalaya, members of the local Lions Club and unnumbered people of all communities and religions had been waiting patiently. Sri Haripada Malakar who was once in Indian National Army, and the National Teacher Sri Satish Michael had both come to offer their regards.

At the Brace Bridge station, the students of the Arya Samiti Vidyalaya, the devotees residing in Parnasree, and youth of Sarkarpur Colony, waited with flowers and garlands. Mothers carrying children in their arms too had come out of their habitats. At the Majherhat station, again, thousands had assembled—local people. The members of the Kathamrita Sangha at Sakher Bazar and many elderly persons of Behala waited with fruits and garlands in hand. The workers of the Mint had come too. The handicapped children of an institution too had come. Kajal Ghosh, a blind girl, with her friends too had come to have a share in the experience. For a while buses, trams and mini-buses plying over the Majherhat flyover came to a standstill to oblige their passengers to have just a glimpse of the train as it passed below.

New Alipore (erstwhile Kalighat) station was an ocean of human heads. People

had been waiting from morning expectantly. The students and teachers of the Sarada Mission had been singing songs in praise of Swamiji from morning. The platform was beautifully decorated with many posters and cutouts of Swamiji. Due respect was accorded to Swamiji as the train entered the platform as in previous stations with the playing of bands, blowing of conches, 'uloo' sound, striking of bells, and showers of flowers. A group of ladies greeted 'Swamiji' in traditional manner by offering gifts placed in daintily decorated plates made out of bamboo and paid their respects by waving *Cāmar*. Many devotees had come with heaps of garlands and flower bouquet. After crossing the Adi Ganga, the train picked up speed and sped merrily with people standing on either side of the railway tracks blowing conches, and carrying fruits and garlands as offering.

The devotees of the Tollygunge Bhava-prachar Parishad, the members of the Akhil Bharat Yuva Mahamandal, and the inhabitants of Ranikuti, Kudghat and Tollygunge had been long waiting at the Tollygunge station in hundreds. Below the Tollygunge bridge stood many buses and trams, their drivers and conductors and passengers having deserted their vehicle just to climb up and have a look at the charming sight and offer their respects. Only those who were travelling by the underground rail system got no occasion to see this event of a lifetime. From this station itself could be heard the massive ovation from the Lake Gardens station. The students of the Vivekananda Adarsha Milan Mandir had kept themselves busy from morning, decorating the platform, and singing over the microphone songs in praise of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. As the train entered the station much activity could be seen among those who had been waiting so long for that happy moment. As before with conches, bells, 'uloo' sound and flower garlands people stepped forward to offer their salutations.

Children from the slums came out running from their residences as the train passed by the Lake. People, countless people, eager, expectant, on house tops, on trees, anywhere and everywhere, just for a peep and offering their devotion. Just before the Ballygunge station, at the Dhakuria Railway crossing, waited many hundreds, eager to stop the train. The train however halted at the signal post and many rushed forward.

At the Ballygunge station had come hundreds of students from distant Ashoknagar at the instance of Swami Balabhadrananda. Seated under the shade of a canopy they had been singing devotional songs. Even as the train stopped, they started playing on the *sanai* (a musical instrument), and with shouts of 'Victory to Swami Vivekananda', conches, bells and 'uloo' sound, they welcomed the arrival of Swamiji. From Dhakuria, Jadavpur, Sonarpur and Barui-
pur many had come and assembled at the station. Some of the trains, like the Diamond Harbour (Down) train, had to halt so as to give an opportunity for the devotees and admirers to see the 'Vivekananda Special'.

Before entering Park Circus station the train was greeted by the employees in the tannery who had temporarily stopped their work. And at last, the train journey came to an end as the train entered platform number 10A of the Sealdah station. It must be said to the credit of the many volunteers that they exercised every caution in their power to prevent a stampede.

Anyone who travelled in the train was fortunate, for he could witness the different methods by which people offered their soulful prayer and devotion to Swamiji. True it is that India of all nations knows best how to respond to a spiritual hero. It has not been possible in this report to cover all the different organizations whose representatives came to offer their homage to Swamiji, the inability being largely due to the overwhelming number of such groups.

Sealdah station (south section) wore an

unusually festive look. Beautifully decorated with flowers, garlands, foliage, festoons and banners, it seemed to suggest that all Calcutta was eagerly waiting to welcome the homecoming hero and be blessed by the *darshan* of Swami Vivekananda. More flowers, more banners everywhere; an enquiry office near the entrance to the platform manned by Swamis Divyananda, Sanatanananda, Bodhasarananda, Balabhadrananda, Samarpanananda, Somatmananda and others who took upon themselves the heavy task of guiding the movement of participants from scores of organizations and institutions who came to join the procession, and of arranging for the parking of buses and vehicles that arrived at the station; a 9' high impressive statue of Swamiji made by M/s G. Paul & Sons. Students of the different institutions assembled in assigned places. N.C.C. cadets and volunteers, in conjunction with the Railway Police Civil Defence, bore the heavy responsibility of controlling the crowd.

At the Sealdah Station many had been waiting from 7.30 a.m. expecting that the train would arrive that early because Swami Vivekananda's train came a hundred years ago at that hour. Although the Railway authorities had announced one day earlier in all leading newspapers that the train was to reach Sealdah at 11.25 a.m., it escaped their attention. In a sense they were indeed blessed for they had finished all their work and were silently meditating with that one-pointedness of mind with which the *gopis* waited for their beloved Krishna. Nothing spiritual tires man, that every Indian knows only too well. Today it was demonstrated. Sun mercilessly sending down its scorching rays, the long wait, the huge crowd, possibility of a stampede, losing one's near and dear ones in the crowd, all weighed heavily, no doubt. Yet the joy of participating in the once-in-a-life-time function, of seeing the great Swami Vivekananda just for a moment, of enjoying the blessed feeling of see-

ing Swamiji in flesh and blood even if it be in imagination, all these wiped out completely every trace of fatigue—physical and mental.

Under a decorated canopy, Brahma-charins in rows were chanting from the scriptures. Calcutta Police played on their band. And at about 12.55 p.m. the train came to a halt at the Sealdah station. Thousands of claps, 'uloo' sound, and many groups played their bands. Sri Prasanta Chatterjee, the Mayor of Calcutta, who is looked upon as the first citizen of the city, Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Swami Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj, Hon'ble Sri A.N. Ray (former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India), and Sri R. Chattopadhyaya (General Manager, Eastern Railways) entered the saloon car and amidst many shouts of 'Victory to Swami Vivekananda' garlanded the portrait of Swamiji. They and many other leading citizens of Calcutta like Dr. Rathindra Narayan Basu, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, and Prof. Basudev Burman, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kalyani, had come to the Sealdah Station much earlier to receive 'Swamiji'. Amidst much jostling, the portrait was carefully carried and brought out of the train by the sannyasins. Sri Prasanta Chattopadhyay (Mayor of Calcutta) received the portrait from Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj and accompanied by dignitaries mentioned earlier, placed the portrait of Swamiji in the tastefully decorated horse driven phaeton. The horses had been unyoked and ropes had been tied to allow the phaeton to be dragged as it was done a hundred years ago. The enthusiasm on such an occasion can better be imagined than described.

A Police Band, as also bands from various schools and colleges, accompanied the procession. The roads were decorated with festoons, bunting and garlands. Triumphal gates bearing the message of Swamiji, 'Arise, Awake' in English and Bengali, had been erected at four places, namely, (i) at the

entrance to Sealdah Station (South Section), (ii) at the junction of Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road and Belegghata Main Road, (iii) at the junction of Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road and Mahatma Gandhi Road, and (iv) in front of Surendranath College. A stream of carriages followed Swamiji's phaeton. Thousands of people devotedly watched the procession standing on both sides of the street and, to get a better view, from housetops or verandas of houses adjoining the streets. The joy and enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. It was certainly a day to remember and recall.

When the procession reached the Surendranath College (previously called Ripon College and situated on the Mahatma Gandhi Road), Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj carried a decorated picture of Swamiji (not the one brought from Budge Budge) from Swamiji's carriage to Surendranath College and presented it to the Principal, Dr. Shishutosh Samanta. The procession continued further on to the Mitra Institution (now a Higher Secondary School, where the Ripon College was situated a hundred years ago before being shifted to the site of what is now called the Surendranath College) at 60 B Surya Sen street. There the Head Master, Sri Banshori Mohon Bhattacharyya, garlanded Swamiji's portrait. Another decorated portrait of Swamiji was presented to the Head Master by Swami Mumukshanandaji on behalf of the Centenary Celebration Committee. The procession terminated at the junction of Surya Sen Street and Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray Road.

On this day several meetings were held:

- (i) At Surendranath College Swami Lokeswaranandaji unveiled a plaque commemorating Swamiji's visit to the Ripon College (though a hundred years ago it was at the location of what is now called the Mitra Institution) and a meet-

ing was held at about 1.45 p.m. in which Mayor Prasanta Chatterjee, Dr. Shanti Ranjan Dasgupta (Administrator of the College) and the Principal, Dr. Shishutosh Samanta, spoke.

(ii) At the Mitra Institution the meeting was held at 4.45 p.m. Here also, Swami Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj unveiled a plaque dedicated to Swami Vivekananda commemorating the reception given to the Swami a hundred years ago. The meeting was presided over by Swami Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj, with Swami Mumukshanandaji, Dr. Massaroff Hussain, Prof. Hossainur Rahman, and Sri Sumani Mitra as the speakers. The Head Master, Sri Banshori Mohon Bhattacharya, welcomed the speakers, the audience numbering about 500.

(iii) At the house of the late Pashupati Bose, under the management of the Sutanuti Parishad and the Basu family of Bagbazar, a meeting attended by over 2000 people was held at 6.00 p.m., presided over by Swami Purnatmananda (Editor, *Udbodhan*). Reminiscences of Sri Kumud Bandhu Sen and Swami Shuddhananda, who had attended Swamiji's reception in 1897, were read. In his address of welcome Sri Kamal Basu, Chairman of the Sutanuti Parishad and ex-Mayor of Calcutta, observed that the triumphant victory of Swami Vivekananda enabled Indians to dream of the country's freedom in those days of national gloom. In his presidential address Swami Purnatmananda said that the little known Swami Vivekananda received recognition as the world-conquering spiritual hero on his return from the West. The whole nation rose in unison to welcome him and became inspired in the task of nation-building. Perhaps, this historic return of the spiritual hero was painted by Rabindranath Tagore in his poem, 'Barshashesh'. The meeting came

to a close with songs by the well-known artiste, Sri Ramkumar Chattopadhyay. The vote of thanks was proposed by Sri Purnendu Sengupta, Joint Secretary of the Sutanuti Parishad and Chairman of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation.

(iv) A meeting was held at 6.30 p.m. at the Ramakrishna Satyananda Alambazar Math (where Swami Vivekananda and his brother monks had stayed) participated in by about 300 people. Swami Bhadreswaranandaji of the Ramakrishna Satyananda Alambazar Math gave a short introductory speech and Dr. Kalyan Bandyopadhyaya spoke as the Chief Guest. Swami Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj, in his Presidential Address said that Swami Vivekananda's return to India in 1897 was an event of great significance in Indian history and cast a far-reaching influence on the national life.

The Calcutta dailies prominently publicized in their issues of 20 February the reports of the grand celebration with pictures and bold headlines. Many described the congregation at every station from Budge Budge to Sealdah as a 'sea of human heads'. Mentioning the near-stampede condition which prevailed at the Budge Budge and Sealdah stations, some newspapers did not fail to observe that greater precautionary measures should have been taken by the police. Sri Tarun Dutta, the State Chief Election Commissioner, specifically observed that any big disaster could have taken place at any time. The *Statesman*, observing the mood of the people of Calcutta, wrote a report on 20 February under the caption, 'Calcutta Relives Swamiji's Return from Chicago'.

23rd February 1997

At 3.00 p.m. a meeting was held at the Deshbandhu Park in North Calcutta to commemorate the Civic reception given to Swami Vivekananda in 1897 at the Shov-

abazar Rajbati. About 10,000 people attended. Sri Prasanta Chatterjee, the Mayor of Calcutta, presided over the meeting in the beginning and gave his speech in the middle of the programme as he had to leave early on some urgent work. Thereafter, Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj presided over the rest of the programme. Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj was the Chief Guest. A message in Bengali from Most Revered President Maharaj of the Ramakrishna Order, Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji, was read out by Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj (a free translation into English published in the June 1997 issue). Excerpts from Swami Vivekananda's reply to the address of welcome given to the Swami at Calcutta were read out by Sri Pradip Ghosh, Joint Director, Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of West Bengal. Other speakers on the occasion included Sri A. N. Ray (former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India), Sri Chittatosh Mukherjee (Chairman, Human Rights Commission, West Bengal), Sri Kamal Basu (former Mayor of Calcutta), Dr. Rathindra Narayan Basu (Vice-Chancellor, University of Calcutta), Sri Manishankar Mukherjee (renowned litterateur) and Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj. Opening and closing songs were sung by Dr. Anup Ghosal and Swami Sarvagananda. The vote of thanks was given by Sri Purnendu Sengupta (Chairman, Calcutta Corporation).

In his address of welcome, Sri A.N. Ray explained the spiritual significance of the Missionary work started by Swamiji. In his introductory speech, Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj pointed out that Swami Vivekananda not only presented the spiritual heritage of India to the West but also opened the eyes of his own countrymen to their own spiritual treasures. To him religion meant love and serving man as God. India has to accept science and technology from the West, but she has to give them

spiritual wisdom in return. Swamiji, he continued, was a citizen of the world and the religion he preached was universal. In his speech, Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj stressed the need for the reawakening of the youth in the light of the ideals for which Swami Vivekananda stood. The unknown, unheard of Narendranath shone like a million suns and held spell-bound the entire world transforming himself into a Vivekananda by sheer courage, self-reliance and, above all, by his unswerving faith in his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna. This is perhaps the greatest wonder of the century. Sri Prasanta Chatterjee, Mayor of Calcutta, said that Swami Vivekananda, the illustrious son of Calcutta, had established India on the pinnacle of glory in the world forum by placing before an august audience the spiritual heritage of India. He was the first to say that the illiterate, the low-caste Indians were his very brothers and sisters. It was this love for humanity that transformed Swamiji into a universal personality. Swamiji's message and work had kindled nationalism in the people of India. Swamiji had also laid special emphasis on raising the status of women. He transmitted to us great energy and self-confidence. The nation has to follow the path shown by Swamiji if it is to become stronger. We can, indeed, never repay our debt to Swamiji. Renowned litterateur Sri Manishankar Mukherjee said that Swamiji had, through his strength of character, overcome many an opposition during his lifetime. Dr. Rathindra Narayan Basu felt that Swami Vivekananda, who was a condensed India, specially stood against all forms of sectarianism. To Swamiji, religion was being and becoming. The Swami's ideals are universal. Posterity will feel proud of him for ages to come, he said. Sri Chittatosh Mukherjee, Chairman, Human Rights Commission, said that in the matter of human rights too Swami Vivekananda was one from whom anyone could learn a few lessons. Swamiji taught us to look upon all

humanity as our very own. He was in main responsible for the awakening of the Indian masses. Sri Kamal Basu said that Karl Marx viewed religion as a weapon for exploitation. Swamiji too held the same view, but in respect of priest-craft, which under the guise of religion really exploits humanity. However, alongside, Swamiji showed in and through his life what religion truly is and how it achieves human excellence in man by awakening purity and holiness in him. Religion then becomes a means for human welfare rather than a weapon for exploitation. Today, we have to specially bear in mind this vigorous and positive side of religion pointed out by Swamiji. The meeting ended with a thought-provoking speech by Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj. He said that the peerless glory attained by a wandering mendicant of a slave nation in a foreign land brought about a hitherto unseen revival in national consciousness and a national awakening. This historic role played by Swamiji inspired Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarvepalli Dr. Radhakrishnan, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Romain Rolland, Rabindranath Tagore and many others, as can be seen from their writings or speeches.

Before the commencement of the meeting, the Surapith group of musicians led by Sri Arun Kumar Ghosh presented a musical composition on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda. The entire proceedings of the meeting was conducted by Swami Purnatmananda. The vote of thanks was presented by Sri Purnendu Sengupta, Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation.

28 February 1997

A meeting was held on 28 February 1997 at the Shovabazar Rajbati (North Calcutta) where Swami Vivekananda was given a Civic Reception by the citizens of Calcutta. This meeting was arranged by Sutanuti Parishad in cooperation with the descendants of the Deb family of Shovabazar.

A packed audience of about 3000 people heard the inspiring speeches of Swami Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj, Swami Purnatmananda and some eminent citizens like Dr. Hossainur Rahman and Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu.

After the Vedic chanting with which the programme started, the lights illuminating the venue were switched off one by one. On the dais had been placed a beautiful painting of Swamiji in the Chicago pose drawn by the famous artist, Sri Bikash Bhattacharya. This painting was illuminated and simultaneously Sri Aritra Gupta, a young student dressed like Swamiji, recited a portion from the Chicago Address of Swamiji.

Sri Kamal Basu welcomed the guests and the speakers. In his speech Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu said that the Maharaja of Durbangha and many eminent people of Bengal withdrew themselves from the reception given to Swamiji on the ground that the Swami was not a Brahmin by birth and that he had crossed the seas. At such a juncture, Raja Binoy Krishna Deb of Shovabazar had boldly come forward and played a leading role in the reception given to Swamiji by presiding over the meeting arranged at his Rajbati. This was therefore an occasion to pay homage to Raja Binoy Krishna Deb too.

Sri Shyamal Narayan Deb, the senior-most member of the Rajbati, recounted the part played by their ancestors in disseminating education and culture in Bengal and observed that his father's elder brother, Sri Jatindra Krishna Dev was greatly loved by Sri Ramakrishna. He was also a close friend of Swamiji who had gone to the Rajbati many times before the historic reception at Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna too had gone there and made obeissance to Sri Govindaji, their family deity. Sri Ramakrishna, the speaker recalled, seeing that the male members of the household were offering their respects to Sri Govindaji with their palms joined together, corrected them saying that they should offer respects to the Divine by

prostrating before the deity.

Dr. Hossainur Rahman said that the spirit of India and of the entire world reflected in the personality of Swamiji who always viewed in all humanity the presence of a universal existence. The Swami's Vedantic message related to this all-pervading universal consciousness whose self-expression cannot be suppressed by space, time and causation.

Swami Purnatmananda highlighted the far-reaching significance of the Calcutta Reception. Many of our citizens, before and after Swami Vivekananda, had gone abroad and returned to India with great honours. But the return of Swami Vivekananda to India was, in fact, the return of one who represented the soul of India. It was an event of topmost significance to our nation. Perhaps, this event found expression in Rabindranath Tagore's drama, 'Phalguni'.

Releasing a souvenir published by the organizers on this occasion, Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj said that Swamiji had established the religious heritage of India on solid foundation. Behind the popularity of Vedanta and Yoga in the West today, lay the significant contribution of Swamiji. The opening of the Departments of Eastern Studies in the universities in the West nowadays is in no small measure owing to the sublime influence of Swamiji's personality and unique presentation of Vedanta and In-

dian thoughts. Historically significant, therefore, was Swamiji's return to India after playing a significant role in the West before playing an equally significant role in his own motherland.

Additional Information

About 5000 copies of the booklet *Vivekananda Bharat Pratyavartan* and 19,000 copies of leaflets containing an abridged version of Swamiji's reply to the Calcutta Address of Welcome were distributed free to the people assembled at Sealdah on 19 February. About 11,000 copies of the same leaflet were distributed to those who came to the meeting at Deshbandhu Park on 23 February.

The following institutions published booklets on Swami Vivekananda's historic return to India: (i) Udbodhan, 6 titles in Bengali released by Revered Swami Gahanandaji Maharaj during the meeting on 23 February, (ii) Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2 titles in Bengali, and (iii) Advaita Ashrama, 2 titles in English (*Swami Vivekananda's Historic Return from the West and Indian Awakening* and *To the Citizens of Calcutta*)

The Advaita Ashrama and the Udbodhan each published a special number of their journal.

Some private organizations too brought out booklets/pictures/posters for sale at very attractive prices. □

If during your meditation you pray for men or money or worldly honours, your desires will no doubt be satisfied to some extent; but, mind you, there is the dread of the tiger behind the gifts you get. Those tigers—disease, bereavements, loss of honour and wealth, etc.—are a thousand times more terrible than the live tiger.

—Sri Ramakrishna, *Tales and Parables*

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the May 1997 issue)

तदेतत् सत्यं
यथा सुदीप्तात्पावकाद्विस्फुलिङ्गाः
सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः।
तथाऽक्षराद्विविधाः सोम्य भावाः
प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति॥

*Tad-etat satyam
Yathā sudīptāt-pāvakād-visphuliṅgāḥ
sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ;
Tathākṣarād-vividhāḥ, somya, bhāvāḥ
prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti. (II.i.1.)*

That thing as also this is true. As from a well-blazing fire fly off sparks, in the thousands, which are alike in form to the fire, similarly, O my calm friend, from the Imperishable (Immutable), beings of different kinds are produced and into It they merge again.

The purpose of this *mantra* is to highlight the unity behind diversity—the Oneness behind the many-ness and variety in the universe. The Upaniṣad now teaches the subject of higher knowledge (*parā-vidyā viśaya*) by quoting a perfect example which removes the confusion in the mind of the taught. We now enter the field of precise thinking. One of the avenues of knowledge open to us is perceptual observation gained through the five senses, the instruments in our possession for grasping the cosmos. Being rational beings, we collate, arrange and coordinate all perceived data and link them into information and theories of conceptual knowledge. Finally, these intellectual concepts lead to intuitive experience (*yogaja*

jñāna). The least enlightened remain in direct perception (*pratyakṣa*); those of a little more inquiring type rise to and are satisfied with conceptual knowledge; and those who are still dissatisfied extend their means of knowledge to transcend the sense plane and grasp the Oneness of the universe, the unity in diversity through intuition (*aparokṣa*).

The teacher gives examples to clarify ideas which he cannot convey through arguments. Also he does not want to establish through argumentation the Oneness of the universe lest he lose the confidence of the student. So he comes down to the practical level and cites what we experience daily. From this plane he will take us to the conclusion of *nirguṇa*, *nirākāra*, *nirvikalpa satya* (truth devoid of all qualifying adjuncts). At present these terms are merely words to us as we cannot conceive in our minds something which has no form, quality or modulation. We have no experiential knowledge just now of that Immutable Brahman. But our intelligence is trained to grasp the idea that there must be a Unity in diversity, one Fountainhead, one Source from which all this manifoldness has come forth. Telling us that the whole world is *mithyā* or *māyā* (delusion) will make no sense to us in our present state in which we experience only through our senses. What should be the style of teaching which the teacher should adopt so that the student will understand without getting confused? So the Upaniṣad takes the help of the methods of *dṛṣṭānta* (example) and *adhyāropa-apavāda* (superimposition and contradiction). The teacher is trying to impart a clear intellectual understanding of the Absolute because doubts

(*saṁśaya*) can only be removed by experience of *samādhi*. Till then doubts will continue to haunt the unenlightened.

We pass from lesser truth to greater truth till we reach the Absolute Truth. If we take pictures of the sun from various altitudes, all the pictures will be different but of the same object. Similarly, Atman or Brahman which we are striving to realize is eternal and true, but appears in different forms according to our level of awareness. Recognition of this is the purpose of our study. When *apavāda* is completed, *yogaja jñāna* (intuitive experience) of the Imperishable Immortal Essence arises.

On a piece of rope many *adhyāśas* (superimpositions) can be imagined; we can see a snake, a piece of garland, a streak of water, a crack in the road, according to our *saṁskāras*, latent impressions. The *visphuliṅgāḥ* (sparks) constitute the *adhyāropa* (superimposition). A spark may not burn up a garment but it can make a hole in it. The teacher, by citing the simile of a roaring fire which emits sparks in all directions, is driving at the idea that we are related to Brahman as the sparks to the fire. The fire is the basis of the oneness of the multifarious sparks. We should not hold ourselves to be different from the *Akṣara*, the Imperishable One. Thus this example is a constant reminder to the fact that the numerous things we see in the world are sparks of the same Reality and are of the same nature.

However, the Upaniṣad has used the term *Akṣara*, or changeless. Then how can it justify that this changeful world arises from It? The first two lines of this *mantra* give the simile, while the next two lines give the lesson. Thousands of sparks emerge from and go back into the fire. The sparks are *sarūpāḥ*, of the same nature, as the fire. They are called sparks and not fire because of their limited extensity and intensity. In the same manner, the changeful names-forms arising from the *Akṣara* (unchangeable Reality) go back to It and are of Its nature. So let us start

from the premise that the 'is-ness' or 'existence' of which I am aware is the reflection of the Divine Atman or Brahman. Having heard the well-posed question of the worthy pupil, the teacher is obliged to impart this wisdom.

दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः।

अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात्परतः परः॥

*Divyo hy-amūrtah puruṣaḥ
sabāhyābhyantaro hyjah;
Aprāṇo hy-amanāḥ śubhro
hy-akṣarāt-parataḥ parah. (II.i.2.)*

Puruṣa is transcendental, since He is heavenly and formless. And since He is co-extensive with all that is external and internal, unborn, therefore, He is without vital force and without mind. He is pure and higher than the (other) high and Imperishable (i.e. Immutable) Māyā.

Apart from the example the teacher has to adopt the method of *adhyāropa-apavāda* to answer the question of the sharp and well-prepared student, and explain the four levels of awareness: *suṣupti* (dreamless sleep), *svapna* (sleep), *jāgrat* (waking), and *turiya* (fourth, i.e. transcendental), corresponding to the four levels of existence: *alika* (false), *prātibhāsika sattā* (illusory existence), *vyāvahārika sattā* (relative existence) and *pāramārthika sattā* (transcendental experience) in Vedānta.

To explain the world in which we live, the teacher has to refer to the four levels of man's awareness and existence; otherwise the student will reject the teaching. If, for me, multiplicity exists in *jāgrat* but nothing exists in *suṣupti*, there must be a parallel to this experience in the cosmos. That is why it is said that *ajñāna* has covered the Reality of the cosmos and our mind perceives diversity while there is in truth only one *adhiṣṭhāna* or substratum. And the teacher takes the student to the level of *turiya* where there

is the disappearance of the appearance of this world of *māyā* (*prapañca upaśama*) forever. Starting from the position of *jāgrat avasthā*, the teacher's aim is to take us to *turiya avasthā* where our true original nature is known to us. As long as the rope is not seen as a rope, the snake seen there is as real as one's own existence. Similarly, as long as we have not seen or experienced Atman or Brahman, beyond the framework of names-forms, the world is real and concrete to us. We are allowed to commit the mistake of seeing the snake-world till we see its disappearance once and for all in *turiya avasthā*. There is no further chance of *ajñāna* confusing us after we have that ultimate experience.

My true original nature is *divya*, self-ef-fulgent, not needing any supporting light to reveal It, just as no lamp is needed to see the sun. The word *dyotanavān* suggests that there is light which makes it possible to see and know our own existence. The Atman is self-aware of Its existence. When I think of myself, not using my senses, I am aware that I am, and the awareness of 'am-ness' is independent of every external aid. Awareness of existence is *bodha* or *cetanā*, and this is self-revealed awareness (*svasaṁvedya cetanā*). This experience is projected in the world (during sense perception) to enable us to discover that That Existence is reflecting in

me. As the sparks of the fire are quantitatively the same but qualitatively different, even so this existence-consciousness is limited and That (*Akṣara*) is unlimited. So the term used is light, but it suggests awareness (*cetanā*). In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the teaching is that the sun, the moon, etc. are not real sources of light but Atman alone is the source of light or knowledge¹ which is described here as *divya amūrta puruṣa*. It is *amūrta* because all forms are only appearances and unreal (like the snake in the rope), while It is transcendental. All manifested, separate, individual forms are short-term experiences which will one day give way to 'ayam ātmā brahma' this Atman is Brahman, 'aham brahmāsmi' I am Brahman.

It does not have life (*aprāṇa*) or mind (*amana*) like animate beings; we are born but It is unborn. It is sublime, untainted and pure, and to know It one has to upgrade one's awareness from the physical plane to the spiritual plane. That Reality is also called the *Puruṣa* which means the Cosmic Being or one who resides in the body (*pūrṇatvāt*, *puri śayanatvāt*). It encompasses the cosmos. All forms that exist are Its appearance and It is also all-pervading and resides in all the bodies—the city of nine gates. It is eternal and *pūrṇa* (whole) and not compartmental. If you look into the water contained in many pots and see many reflected suns, it does not make the sun multiple. Even so, though It is the Reality, external and internal, It cannot be partitioned into outside and inside. Finally, that *Akṣara* transcends the *parā* and *aparā*, suggesting that words cannot define It. Because of Its being the root of the world, It transcends the world. The teacher has used the term *Akṣara* before, but he uses it here with a different meaning. Brahman cannot be the cause of anything, for, then that would mean that It could be converted into Its products and would no more be the *Akṣara*. So here *Akṣara* is used to denote the golden womb or egg, the *Hiraṇyagarbha*,

1. *Astamita āditye, yājñavalkya, candramasya-
astamite, śānte'agnau, śāntāyaṁ vāci,
kim-jyotir-evayaṁ puruṣa iti;
Ātmaivāsyā jyotir-bhavati-iti,
ātmanaiivāyaṁ jyotiṣāste, palyayate
karma kurute, vipālyeti-iti.*

—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV.3.6.)

'When the sun and the moon have both set, the fire has gone out, and speech stopped, Yājñavalkya, what exactly serves as the light for a man?' 'The self senses as his light. It is through the light of the self that he sits, goes out, works and returns.' 'It is just so, Yājñavalkya.'

The Urgency of Psychic Mutation for Our Survival

DR. SAMPOORAN SINGH

From time immemorial man has been cherishing towards sensory perceptions either an attitude that they are final or that there is more than what meets the eye. Truths revealed to sages in the depths of their meditation are not open to verification through the sense instruments, the usual scientific method for collecting facts. Modern science is now trying to bridge the gap.

Dr. Sampooran Singh of Chandigarh examines this position in the light of the advances made in the scientific domain and concludes that the survival of the human race requires the application of spiritual truths to the problems facing humankind.

Quiet revolutions in scientific thinking have challenged our exclusive reliance on an empirical understanding of the universe and on the mechanistic world-view which have guided the Western civilization for the last four decades. The epochal discoveries are: (a) acceptance by physicists that all their theories of natural phenomena, including the 'laws' the phenomena obey are constructs of the human mind, properties of *our conceptual map* of reality rather than of reality itself; (b) acceptance of consciousness by many eminent scientists as being fundamental, all events/processes/existences being its manifestations, leading the Committee on Science and Technology to the House of Representatives, U.S.A., to suggest in 1981 further research on the 'physics of consciousness'; and (c) that the universe is an integrated and self-energizing system, where everything is interrelated and interpenetrated.

The outstanding feature of the last decade of the twentieth century is likely to be the final collapse of the materialistic paradigm—known as Cartesian-Newtonian-Marxist model. The old structures have begun to crumble and new ones have not taken shape so far. Consciousness now emerges

not as an epi-phenomenon of matter but as the fundamental factor in our perception of the universe around us. The current turmoil in scientific thinking shows clearly that at this crucial evolutionary crossroads, humankind is groping for a new model, a new philosophy, a new paradigm, a new consciousness to replace the old.

We shape our sensate 'reality' from the minuscule amount of information our sensory mechanism gathers and organize it from experience into our 'map' of reality, the human-made social cosmos. We can extend/modify the capacity of our sensors by coupling our sensors with artefacts, and construct a different 'map' of reality. Reality is thus a reflection of our experience and knowledge, our conditioning and belief systems. Thus in human history we have been perceiving the universe and ourselves in a very distorted fashion.

Scientific explorations in the external objective world without recognition of the changes in the internal subjective world have resulted in: (a) the fragmentation of the human mind into the subject and the object, thus creating two worlds from one', and leading to dualistic illusion divorced from

reality; and (b) man has started living in the human-made social cosmos. There is thus a crisis of perception, which is defined as: (a) unawareness of the fact, the Truth; and (b) awareness of the mutilated fact, the false. And we are now at such a juncture when humanity is in supreme peril, not from another species, not from outer space, but from itself, threatening the extinction of all life-supporting systems within a foreseeable period of time.

This crisis of perception has led to the formation of a self-seeking society which is competitive, violent and with scant attention to moral norms, human suffering and interpersonal relationship. Will W. Harman wrote,

Western society is drifting towards increasing entropy, economic and technological chaos, ecological disaster, and ultimately, psychic dismemberment and disintegration. Nothing less than an epistemological revolution will stem these tendencies.

Unfortunately, the worst features of Western civilizations are being abetted by the worst features of our system in India and other under-developed countries, leading to increase in global entropy at an accelerating pace. 'The world-view implied by modern physics,' wrote Capra, 'is inconsistent with our present society, which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature.'

Physics, during the last one century, has shown that the disease is embedded in the human psyche, in the content of the human consciousness. In spite of this man has not cared to explore the conditioned psyche. All his activities have been focussed to bring reforms in the socio-political-economic field! It implies that man has been trying to change the symptoms in the external field,

with the hope that *somehow* there will be a transformation in his inner motivations. And this experiment has proved to be an illusion.

Psychic Mutation and Perennial Religious Philosophy

What is needed today is a mutation of the human psyche, a creation of a new landscape for life, and a building of a new edifice on the foundational plank of justice, equity and oneness of mankind. We must understand that an order in the external world is only a reflection of the order in the internal world. Again there cannot be a global order without a global ethic, and a global ethic emerges from a non-dual mode of human perception. What we need is a spiritual regeneration of our forgotten past heritage to be a beacon to humankind. We cannot afford to jettison our scientific achievements, but we have to explore our past heritage in the light of modern science. At the same time, we have to deeply comprehend that the knowledge enshrined in all the scriptures of the world is at the ideal or conceptual level today and cannot bring in psychic mutation, at least for the vast majority of humankind.

The scientific exploration leads to self-acquaintance with the psychodynamics, limitations and the cause of the conditioning of the psyche. This brings in psychic mutation, but it should be clearly appreciated that the new scientific exploration will not contradict the 'past heritage' but it will bestow vitality to that non-dualistic philosophy. Scientific exploration of the inner world bestows perception of the wholeness, intuition, quantum logic. Further, quantum logic does not contradict the perennial religious philosophy but only fulfils it.

Psychic Mutation, World Peace and Human Survival

Many eminent perceptive thinkers and philosophers believe that, 'What is needed

today is a great architect of human mind who can reshape human consciousness.... A great architect of mind must, therefore, precede or coexist with architects of cities and buildings.' We need not go in search of 'mind's architect' because 'human technology', or 'science of life', has been explored in the last decade.¹ Science has now begun to focus on the convergence of man and nature, man and ecology. What we need is that lovers of humankind must join hands, hold dialogues, conferences and symposia, use the modern tools of media and television to bring in an 'inner urge' to look into humanist technology. Perhaps this joint effort with an openness characteristic of any scientific investigation will lead to a second model of human mind and mutation of human psyche.

The renowned research physician-biologist, Jonas Salk, wrote in 1983:

There are few indeed who can make choices of direction that would lead to the avoidance of catastrophe and the solution of problems that have arisen in the course of evolution. But such individuals do exist. It matters little that they are few in number. Only a few are needed to visualize and initiate a process that would become self-organizing, self-propelling, and self-propagating, as is characteristic of evolutionary processes.

It is not necessary for everyone to be conscious of the evolutionary process. It is sufficient that it be seen by a small but critical number of people. It is sufficient that the vision of conscious, creative evolution be seen by a few here and there at

different levels of population and in different parts of the world.... The characteristic of this species is not of the social, political, or economic power. It is one that possesses evolutionary qualities of insight, foresight, and creativity.²

We have to move consciously into the next stage in human evolution, which is a quantum jump from psycho-social evolution to spiritual evolution.

Edgar D. Mitchell, Apollo 14 astronaut, wrote,

The most critical issue is awareness and consciousness since nothing will change without changed perception of 'reality'. And everything will begin to change in the right direction as soon as there is a changed perception of reality.³

In April 1993, over 1670 scientists including 104 Nobel laureates, issued a declaration called 'World Scientists' Warning to Humanity'. It made the observation, 'A new ethic is required—a new attitude towards discharging our responsibility for caring for ourselves and for the earth.'

The 1993 Parliament of World's Religions which met at Chicago, concluded, 'Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first.'

Psychic mutation involves a major conceptual shift from competition to co-operation, from conflict to convergence, from hedonism to holism. It guides a man to grow from intellect to intelligence, and from knowledge to understanding, from succes-

1. Sampooran Singh, *The Self and Its Mind-Brain Equipment*, 1987; *Science and Spirituality Booklets*, Nos. 1 to 5, 1988; *The Human Survival*, 1993; *Science, Human Values, Value Education and Peace*, 1993; *Science of Life*, 1994; and *The Pilgrimage to the Third Millennium*, 1995.

2. Jonas Salk, *Anatomy of Reality*, 1983.

3. Edgar D. Mitchell, *Paradigm Shift: Consciousness Research and Planetary Change*, Conference at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, 1992.

sive consciousness to simultaneous consciousness. It heals the diseased mind-brain system.

There are many thinkers such as Teilhard de Chardin, Tagore, Lecomte du Noüy and Julian Huxley, who spoke of a change in the direction of evolution and we ought to examine their insights. Both Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo foresee the coming of a new race and consciousness. Julian Huxley thinks that the great opportunity today will be found in applying scientific methods to the exploration of man's inner life, the cartography of man's inner space. There is much evidence to show that evolution is gaining in the psychic domain of the world. Science is now prying into the evolutionary impulse of life. We must learn to match the science of things and events (knowledge) with the science of Self (wisdom), or in other words, we need to make a quantum jump from knowledge to wisdom.

India's Responsibility for Human Survival

The doyen of historians, Arnold Toynbee, acknowledged India's greatness and relevance for the entire human race in the following memorable words:

It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is an Indian way. The Emperor Ashoka's and Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family—and, in the Atomic age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.

Sri Aurobindo pointed out that a human being is a transitional creature, poised somehow halfway between the animal and the divine, and that the next phase in evolution will be more a psychological and spiritual transformation than a physical one.

Swami Vivekananda stressed that human reason has to be developed into a more adequate instrument capable of intuition or insight so that man may be enabled to pursue the quest for truth. He said:

On reason we must have to lay our foundation; we must follow reason as far as it leads; and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane.⁴

Modern science has rejected the narrow and rigid framework of classical reason. In the words of Heisenberg:

...the change in the concept of reality manifesting itself in quantum theory is not simply a continuation of the past; it seems to be a real break in the structure of modern science.⁵

The 'classical' reason makes a quantum jump to 'quantum' logic (unfettered, unconditioned philosophical reason). We have therefore to explore the field of the mystery of man's inner nature. This is a vast field for study—the field of his Consciousness, the field of man's Self-awareness, his being the eternal subject and not the object of his perception. We have to explore man's noblest and most mysterious faculty: the ability to transcend sense perception and perceive one's inner Being by turning the mind inward.

4. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, edn. 11, vol. 1, p. 185.

5. Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 33.

Krishnamurti said, 'India has lived all these centuries on ideas. She has to move from a life based on ideas, which are non-facts, to seeing of facts only.' We need flowering of the human psyche. We have to create a symbiosis between man and man, between man and the animal world, and, between man and his environment.

Concluding Comment

Junctures come in human history, though rarely, when one age dies giving birth to the new, when the old 'pseudo' culture gives way to the new 'true' culture—an age of transition, transformation and transmutation. Today humanity is poised for the most crucial, the most difficult transition it has ever sought to accomplish, and that is a quantum jump from psycho-social evolution to spiritual evolution. We need a paradigm shift in our world-view—from Cartesian-Newtonian model to the 'whole'-istic (holistic) model, from an infinitesimal sampling of the information to a perception of the Wholeness. Each one of us must aim at the perception of the Truth at the core of one's being, the Absolute, the Infinite, and this perception is the birthright of all human beings. In this effort is embedded human freedom, peace and bliss. We have thus to work for the survival of the human race on earth.

Peace is related to human psychology. It requires the mutation of human psyche. Peace is not only non-war and non-aggression in the external world, but it is also non-violence in thought, word and deed in the inner world. It is moving from a fragmentary, partial or compartmentalized perspective of life to a holistic view of life. There has to be a global effort in this direction which has to be monitored and co-ordinated by a global agency.

The fact is that even as man is the first among the species on this planet to be self-conscious, in other words, conscious of him-

self being conscious, man is also the first to have to grapple with the implications, at once profoundly disturbing and endlessly fascinating, of the possibility of transcending himself. Transcendence requires us to jettison living in the man-made cosmos in favour of living in communion with nature, or to make a quantum jump from self-consciousness to All-consciousness, or from fragmentary knowledge to the perception of Wholeness, or transcending pain, misery and travails to imbibe freedom, peace and bliss. There is need for a paradigm shift from 'classical' reason to 'quantum' logic. This transcendence bestows intuition or insight which alone can decondition the diseased brain. When there is a clear insight into the cause of violence, that very insight roots out all violence. Insight is total perception and from that totality of perception there can arise only logical, sane and humane action. Only then there can be a flowering of the mind. Then alone can there be a harmonious growth.

Nature's evolutionary impulse, being benevolent, is trying to help the human race to survive. Transient socio-economic-political movements (reforms) cannot impede this process. Life is not a means to an end but life is an end in itself. Life itself is divine, it is something sacred, and reverence for all forms of life is the perfume of religiosity.

Men of science are addressing themselves to the most fundamental challenge—the survival of the human race. The old chasm between knowledge and wisdom which has widened dangerously, is being bridged. We are now experiencing the benign turn of destiny which will enable us to stave off disaster. Will India get up from its deep slumber and be a beacon to humankind? Let us awake, arise, and travelling across the razor-edged path stop not until the divine goal is achieved. □

Faith and Strength—II

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. 'I will drink the ocean,' says the persevering soul, 'at my will mountains will crumble up.' Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard, and you will reach the goal.

Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionized.

Death is better than a vegetating ignorant life; it is better to die on the battle-field than to live a life of defeat.

Do something heroic! Brother, what if you do not attain Mukti, what if you suffer damnation a few times? Is the saying untrue?—

‘मनसि वचसि काये पुण्यपीयूषपूर्णा, त्रिभुवनमुपकारश्रेणिभिः प्रीणयन्तः। :

परगुणपरमाणुं पर्वतीकृत्य नित्यं, निजहृदि विकसन्तः सन्ति सन्तः कियन्तः॥

—There are some saints who full of holiness in thought, word, and deed, please the whole world by their numerous beneficent acts, and who develop their own hearts by magnifying an atom of virtue in others as if it were as great as a mountain' (Bhartrihari, *Nitishataka*).

Can anything be done unless everybody exerts himself to his utmost? 'उद्योगिनं पुरुषसिंहमुपैति लक्ष्मीः' etc.—'It is the man of action, the lion-heart, that the Goddess of Wealth resorts to.' No need of looking behind. FORWARD! We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage, and infinite patience, then only will great things be achieved.

Be not in despair; the way is very difficult, like walking on the edge of a razor; yet despair not, arise, awake, and find the ideal, the goal.

Let people say whatever they like, stick to your own convictions, and rest assured, the world will be at your feet. They say, 'Have faith in this fellow or that fellow', but I say, 'Have faith in yourself first', that's the way. Have faith in yourself—all power is in you—be conscious and bring it out. Say, 'I can do everything.'

'Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it.'

Once when I was in Varanasi, I was passing through a place where there was a large tank of water on one side and a high wall on the other. It was in the grounds where there were many monkeys. The monkeys of Varanasi are huge brutes and are sometimes surly. They now took it into their heads not to allow me to pass through their street, so they howled and shrieked and clutched at my feet as I passed. As they pressed closer, I began to run, but the faster I ran, the faster came the monkeys and they began to bite at me. It seemed impossible to escape, but just then I met a stranger who called out to me, 'Face the brutes.' I turned and faced the monkeys, and they fell back and finally fled. That is a lesson for all life—face the terrible, face it boldly. Like the monkeys, the hardships of life fall back when we cease to flee before them. If we are ever to gain freedom, it must be by conquering nature, never by running away. Cowards never win victories. We have to fight fear and troubles and ignorance if we expect them to flee before us.

'Existence can never be non-existence, neither can non-existence ever become existence. ...Know, therefore, that that which pervades all this universe is without beginning or end. It is unchangeable. There is nothing in the universe that can change [the Changeless]. Though this body has its beginning and end, the dweller in the body is infinite and without end.'—Knowing this, stand up and fight! Not one step back, that is the idea. ...Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the sphere! Let the whole world stand against us! Death means only a change of garment. What of it? Thus fight! You gain nothing by becoming cowards. ...Taking a step backward, you do not avoid any misfortune. You have cried to all the gods in the world. Has misery ceased? The masses in India cry to sixty million gods, and still die like dogs. Where are these gods? ...The gods come to help you when you have succeeded. So what is the use? Die game. ...This bending the knee to superstitions, this selling yourself to your own mind does not befit you, my soul. You are infinite, deathless, birthless. Because you are infinite spirit, it does not befit you to be a slave. ...Arise! Awake! Stand up and fight! ♦

The Adorable Saint, Swami Aftab Joo Wanganoo

PROF. A.N. DHAR

The author, of Jammu, discusses in this article 'the impact of the institution of sainthood on the Indian society from time immemorial highlighting 'some distinctive characteristics' of Kashmiri Hindu saints. He describes the life and teachings of the saint Swami Aftab Joo Wanganoo of Kashmir, and of the illustrious guru of the saint as heard from the saint himself. He also adds details about both the saint and his guru gathered from various other sources.

Religion and culture are intertwined in Hinduism; this is evident from the time-honoured institution of sainthood in India that has always got wide acceptance and support from our society. Sainthood orders of many hues and varieties have flourished in this country for ages, since the beginning of the Vedic civilization. Even in the present age of science and technology, sainthood survives in our land and the true saint continues to command respect in society. I have witnessed this fact with particular interest as a native of the valley of Kashmir since my boyhood days. Sadhus and *mahatmas* hailing from various corners of the country, wearing ochre robes or moving about semi-nude (their bodies smeared with ashes) have traditionally been served, fed and treated with great care by the Kashmiri Hindus. We specially noticed this during the days of the *yatra* (journey) to the Amarnath cave undertaken by devotees including a large number of monks.

However, the Kashmiri Hindu saint himself, as a son of the soil, has maintained his identity in preferring to stay indoors, remaining a member of the household though leading a godly and celibate life. Most Kashmiri Hindu saints—though some live in seclusion, in Ashrama or cottages—did not look different from house-

holders in respect of dress or food habits. Of course, the bearing of a saint or some outward mark (such as the length or shape of the *tilak*, mark on the forehead) would suggest that he should be a godly person. Since neither monasticism nor living apart in hermitages is stressed upon in the Śaiva or Śākta doctrines that prevailed among the Hindus in the valley of Kashmir, it is understandable why our saints in Kashmir did not attach any special significance to external renunciation, requiring them to distance themselves from household life. All the same, sadhus and *mahatmas* from outside the valley, recognized as such through distinct outward marks, were treated with reverence here.

To illustrate what true sainthood consists in, as I see it, I have chosen to study the life of a Kashmiri Hindu saint, Swami Aftab Joo Wanganoo—affectionately called 'Akala' by his devotees—, whom I came to know early in my life when I was eighteen years old. Born in the year 1893, he was a resident of Babapora, Habakadal, Srinagar. I recall with feelings of reverence and gratitude my fruitful association with him that did not, however, last long. This was because he gave up his mortal coil in the year 1948 at the age of 55, only within a year of my meeting him.

It was way back in 1947, when my friend Triloki¹ and I studied at the A.S. Degree College, Srinagar, that we met Swami Akalalji for the first time at the famous Kṣīr Bhavāni shrine, Tulamula, Kashmir. Though carefree as young men, we had almost an identical interest in spirituality then and were inwardly engaged in the quest for Truth. Destiny brought us into contact with this saint at a crucial phase in our lives. It was my mother who actually directed us to the precise spot at the Tulamula shrine where the Swami was seated amidst a number of his followers under a chinar tree close to the holy spring of the Bhavāni. As we bowed to him, he immediately dropped a 'hint' to us that conveyed that he had been 'waiting for us'.

He was forthright in telling us that 'as the bird employs *two* wings to fly, you have to practise spirituality and undertake worldly duties simultaneously, i.e., combine *paramārtha* and *vyavahāra*'. This was meant to convey to us that the *sadhaka* should maintain the delicate balance between the practice of meditation and involvement in worldly obligations. The Swami pointedly told us that we had to lead a married life. Perhaps he implied that he did not see marriage as an obstacle to the attainment of spirituality in spite of the fact that he himself was a *brahmacharin*. What I can also infer now from his pronouncement that day, is that he probably foresaw that we had yet to work out our past *karma* as men of the world and, therefore, he advised us to discharge our household duties for our total well-being.

I recall further that as Swami Akalalji spoke kind words to us at the Kṣīr Bhavāni shrine, we felt drawn to him wholly as if we

had known him for a long time. He stood up and just strolled about. Grabbing the opportunity, we followed him and unfolded to him whatever we had to say as spiritual seekers. His response was encouraging: 'My heart is delighted.' Then we three sat together at another spot and were joined by some more devotees. One of them, pointing towards Triloki and me, told Akalalji that we were his friends. In reply the Swami remarked, 'Those whom you call your friends, are my very eyes.' In Kashmiri, the reply sounds lyrical, a rhyming couplet: '*tuhend geyi methar, sen geyi nether*'. What an intimacy grew between the saint we met and ourselves within such a short time!

The Swami Akalal performed *parikrama* (circumambulation) of the holy spring and we walked in step with him, listening to the instructions he gave us further. I vividly recollect the two crucial observations he made:

i) He was categorical in saying that we had to make the best possible use of our present lives. This should consist in consolidating what we had achieved in our past lives. It is *stability* that has to be prized most in the spiritual path, he emphasized. This brings to my mind what Sri Krishna maintains in the sixth chapter (Slokas 43–45) of the *Gita*, that the aspirant has to build on what he has attained in his past life until he is firmly established in *sadhana* (a long pursuit, indeed!).

ii) Cautioning me, the Swami said that during the course of his life, an aspirant has to remain mentally alert and vigilant throughout to avoid pitfalls. Inward purity and peace have to be cultivated at all costs. This calls for patience and perseverance, qualities highly necessary for advancement in spirituality. The Swami gave an illustration to drive home the point: Just as the flowing stream

1. Sri Triloki Nath Dhar, author of several books including *Life and Teachings of Rupa Bhavani*.

swallows up whatever refuse is thrown into it, so should an aspirant develop in himself the capacity for bearing hardships; he should remain unruffled in the extremes of joy and sorrow, never losing his mental equilibrium. The Swami observed further that facing the severity of life heroically and retaining mental composure even in adverse circumstances are a kind of penance that pays the aspirant rich dividends in spiritual terms.

After receiving the *upadeśa* (teaching) so liberally given by the saint (through the Bhavāni's grace), we took leave of him and left the shrine, accompanied by my mother.

Then followed our many periodic visits to the residence of Swami Akalalji at Babapora. During the first such visit, we found to our joy that Akalalji was reciting some mystical verses of his Guru, Swami Zanakak Tuphchi, to some of his devotees seated in front of him in his room. The verses were uttered by him with perfect attention to the tune that made a profound impact on the listeners. I specially noticed the small temple-like wooden structure erected to the left of the Swami's seat, in which was installed a life-size painting of Zanakakji (seated in saintly fashion) with the picture of Akalalji drawn in miniature towards the bottom, just below the Guru's feet. On all the walls of the room were seen, hanging or pasted, photographs of a large number of well-known Kashmiri Hindu saints of the valley, most of whom had already left this mortal world. It was Swami Akalalji himself who had taken the pains to collect all these photographs.

As our visits to the Swami's house got frequent, we became very close to him. Whenever we found him alone, he would lend his ear to our queries and satisfy us with his pointed answers. Often he quoted lines from the mystical utterances of several

celebrated Kashmiri saint-poets including Lal Ded. He had also a good knowledge of the whole text of the *Gita*, and would recite appropriate slokas during the course of a discourse to clarify points and reinforce his teaching. He was well aware of the writings of Swami Vivekananda on Yoga and Vedānta, and was also conversant with Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. Usually in the evenings, whenever there was no likelihood of any visitor intruding, he would talk to us in close confidence and reveal his experiences to us. Very often we heard him chanting these lines in a state of ecstasy, '*Śivo'ham Śivo'ham Śivaḥ Kevalo'ham / Cidānanda rūpaḥ Śivo'ham Śivo'ham*.'

I quite remember how in response to my question once, he talked to us about Maya, characterizing it as the mysterious power of the Lord of the Universe. Dwelling on the distinction between *sukshma maya* and *jada maya* (which I could not quite comprehend then), he made two important observations: (i) It is very difficult, but not impossible, to be free from the entanglement of Maya. The solution of the problem, he said, lay in the aspirant's ability to stand mentally aloof without getting involved in the maze of this phenomenal world of sensory experience. For this, an aspirant has to cultivate dispassion and the power of de-



Swami Aftab Joo Wanganoo

tachment. The Self, he said, is to be realized as the lone witness of all that goes on around us. (ii) The other way of piercing the veil of Maya, and thus getting at the Truth is, he maintained, through our inward purification whereby one's intellect gets finer and finer until, through divine grace, it seizes the elusive Reality.

During the course of his conversation once, Swami Akalalji, who, as I ponder now, had unmistakable marks of a master yogi, explained to us the significance of yogic visions. According to him, having visions of various divinities and hearing 'voices' during meditation, do have significance for the aspirant, but they are not to be looked upon as the ultimate end. As one achieves purity of mind and progresses in meditation, visions do occur which may be seen as landmarks on the path, indicating that the spiritual goal is within reach, though in terms of the steps or stages, its attainment may be still distinct, the spiritual path being aptly compared to 'the razor's edge'. The human form of the divine, encountered as the spiritual aspirant advances during the course of sadhana, may be taken as the *lotus* that emerges from the *Mānasarovar* of the yogi (when his mind is serene and still). All such experiences are valuable indeed, but the aspirant's main goal has to be God-realization, which is nondifferent from Self-realization. All divine forms, the Swami said, are only a reflection of our *svarūpa* (Real Form): that is essentially Formless, comprehending Being and Becoming, paradoxically perceived as the still and everthrobbing Light of Pure Consciousness. In this context, I must mention for elaboration what Akalalji one day told me when I was his lone listener in his room. He said that the divine forms that the spiritual aspirant sees in meditation as distinct from himself fade wholly in the state of *samadhi*: all duality dissolve here and the Self abides in perfect tranquillity; there is no one to converse with and all conversations die

out. What remains is pure Consciousness-Bliss. This is the stage when the little self stands wholly conquered and the aspirant attains Sivahood. About 49 years have passed since I heard this illuminating account of Self-realization from the Master, beloved Akalalji. The nectarine words I heard then still linger in my memory as a constant source of inspiration.

The present account of Swami Akalalji would be incomplete without something said about the spiritual eminence of his Guru, Swami Zanakak Tuphchi. Zanakakji lived a hundred years, of which many years he spent at the Wanganoos' at Babapora until he attained Nirvana. Here he was looked after with great care by Akalalji and others in the family which consisted of his unmarried elder brother, Sirikakji Wanganoo; his two married brothers, Gopinathji and Balji Wanganoo; and two married sisters. It is said of Zanakakji that he was an accomplished yogi and had spiritual *siddhis* at his command. There are two anecdotes that were narrated to Triloki and me by Swami Akalalji which confirm the above belief.

Once Zanakakji directed Akalalji to spend a couple of weeks in solitude inside the Parimahal building on the hill adjacent to the shrine of Goddess Zishta in Srinagar. Akalalji obeyed and stayed away from home, absorbed in meditation. He witnessed a miracle happening everyday: all that he needed for his *puja* and also what he needed to feed himself would materialize at the spot he had chosen for his sadhana. Akalalji also talked of his special love for Brari-Angan, Uma Nagri, where his younger brother Gopinathji, an employee of the State Forest Department, had been posted for three years. Here he practised meditation undisturbed. Once he stayed here continuously for a period of six months and experienced deep *samadhi* that was stable. Talking of the experience, he said, 'The

period of six months seemed to me just a brief interval of six seconds.' This was, of course, a sign of his consummation as a *sadhaka*, his attainment of the 'summit' of divine consciousness. Surely, he was a befitting disciple of his accomplished guru.

The other incident is a fearful story of Swami Akalalji's encounter with an *aghor*, who stayed in the Bairow Mandir, Narsingarh, Srinagar. The *aghor* had befriended Akalalji for sometime and one day he almost succeeded in his evil design which was to offer him as a human sacrifice through his occult power, but the design failed by the grace of Zanakakji. As the *aghor* started his *kriya*, Akalalji, who was seated opposite him, started feeling spellbound (his limbs chained as it were). Some luminous thread-like object materialized before him that gradually took the form of a snake. There were seven earthen plates containing flaming wicks immersed in *ghee* between the *aghor* and Akalalji. When the snake that was formed in the air had moved on to the fifth plate and was very close to Akalalji, he turned his thoughts to his guru, Zanakakji, seeking his spiritual help. Immediately he felt the guru whispering these words to him, 'spit into the *dhuni* (sacred fire)'. He did accordingly and was instantly released from the spell. He rushed back home, where he was admonished by Zanakakji and advised to beware of persons such as the *aghor*. On the following day, Akalalji, out of curiosity, again visited the Bairow Mandir and found to his surprise that the *kriya* had recoiled on the *aghor*; in the process he had lost his own life.

What impressed me most about Swami Akalalji was his extreme devotion to the guru. On several occasions, when he mentioned Zanakakji's qualities, he went into *bhāva-samādhi*. In memory of the Guru, he performed a *yajña* twice annually; on these occasions, he worked with devotion and fer-

vour, paying personal attention to all the participants—an ensemble of specially invited *sadhus*, his own devotees, and relatives—, all of whom were served with *prasad*.

Akalalji's mother was a noble and deeply religious lady. Akalalji imbibed this trait and proved to be the most religious among her six children. As a boy, he spent most of his time in the company of saints and frequented religious places.

Swami Akalalji's father, Sri Keshav Joo Wanganoo, served as a revenue clerk at Leh during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. He was assassinated while in service, on account of which his widow Kudamāl and children had to face great hardships. Swami Akalalji had to stop his studies at the 8th standard. His elder brother took up a job in the State Revenue Department, and, later, Akalalji too took up the job of a messenger in the State Telegraph Department in Srinagar to earn for the huge family.

Akalalji came into contact with Swami Zanakak Tuphchi through his brother-in-law, Sri Janki Nath Misri, a disciple of Zanakakji. Soon Akalalji got attracted to the Swami who gladly accepted him as his disciple.

I have gathered some additional biographical information, reproduced below (with slight repetition of facts already covered), concerning Swami Akalalji from his nephew, Sri Makhanlal Wanganoo²; it touches further upon his family background and also tells us something more about his Guru Zanakakji.

2. Sri Makhanlal Wanganoo furnished this information to me in response to my queries incorporated in a questionnaire, which help is thankfully acknowledged.

Swami Zanakakji was originally a resident of Krimshur, Badgam, whence he moved to Srinagar and stayed first at the Tuphchis' at Dalhasanyar. Thence he shifted to the house of Sri Janki Nath Misri. Akalalji served his Guru devotedly, paying regular visits to the Misri's for this purpose. After the performance of official duties, Akalalji usually took the dinner prepared by his mother to his Guru. Once, on a snowy night at 9 p.m. he went to Sri Misri's house with a bowl of food to be served as dinner to Zanakakji. The main gate of the house was bolted from inside. Despite Akalalji's repeatedly knocking at the gate, no inmate came forward to open it. As a result the devoted disciple remained waiting outside and fell asleep with the bowl of food still in his hands. Next morning, at about 4 a.m., Zanakakji got up and opened the gate. Seeing the devout Akalalji asleep with the bowl in his hands, he woke him up, took him inside and ate the food that had by then become frozen.

From Sri Janki Nath Misri's house, Swami Zanakakji shifted permanently to the residence of his disciple Akalalji at Babapora. The disciple soon realized that he could not devote himself wholly to the service of his Guru and, at the same time, continue serving in the State Telegraph Department. He chose to give up his job and thus had all the time at his disposal to serve his Master to his heart's content. In turn, Zanakakji lavished all care on his promising pupil, who did not take long to learn the skills of a yogi and advance on the spiritual path.

Akalalji's sadhana included daily visits to Hariparvat in the afternoon. Here he practised meditation for hours at the foothill just below the Kali temple. While performing *parikrama* (circumambulation) of Hariparvat, not even once did he go to the shrine of the Goddess Sharika (Chakreswari temple)

and preferred to bow to the Devi from the foothill itself.

Under the direction of his Guru, Akalalji read the *Guru Gita* (in Sharda script) every morning. He also recited the slokas of *Bhavāni Nāmasahasrastuti* and *Indrākṣi Stotram* in the evenings. He was very fond of devotional songs and music. *Kirtans* and *bhajan mandalis* were often held at his house.

People in difficulty, who came seeking his blessings, were received by him with love. He gave them *bhasma* (sacred ashes) from his Guru's *kangri* (the firepot a Kashmiri uses in winter), which he had preserved as a relic. To some he gave *yantras*, consisting of sacred words written in saffron ink on *bhojpatra*. He also used the knife used by his Guru for healing the sick by applying it to the ailing part of the patient's body. Those who sought his help, and this included Muslims also, obviously had total faith in him.

Swami Akalalji was an unostentatious saint, who never dissociated himself from household duties. There was nothing about his dress that would mark him off as a sadhu; he smoked and was a non-vegetarian. He took pleasure in coaching his school-going nephews, Makhanlalji and his younger brother. Makhanlalji still remembers how once he requested his uncle to tell him what he should do to cultivate the habit of getting up early in the morning, without being roused up by any one. The Swami prescribed a method: 'Direct the pillow you rest your head on to wake you at the desired time.' Then a youngster, Makhanlal practised the instruction with success, which he describes today as a 'sort of inculcation for determined action'.

Swami Akalalji visited the holy cave of Amarnath many times. Every year he gifted clothes, money, etc. to many sadhus and mahatmas who joined the *yatra* to the cave.

Swami Zanakakji was learned and versatile. His devotional/mystical poems in Kashmiri, written in his own hand, were carefully preserved by the Wanganooos until they left the troubled valley six years back (it is hoped that no harm has been done to any of the relics kept in the room Zanakakji occupied for years). He was good at astrology and could read horoscopes very well. When he looked at the horoscope of his young disciple, Akalalji, he noticed that the planet Venus occupied the 12th house (Sagittarius), which he considered unfavourable. Using saffron-ink he made a cross-mark on the planet and instead placed it in a different house (to ensure that the planet had a benefic influence on his favourite disciple). As if to fall in line with what Zanakakji had done, Akalalji too did something similar (but not identical) to help the daughter of one of his devotees, in whose horoscope the planet Mars was in a house unfavourable to her matrimonial life, predicting widowhood. Through a religious ritual, she was 'married' to a sapling to ward off the evil influence of the planet. It was seen that in some time the sapling withered away completely, showing that the *tantra* had worked well. Later, the

girl got married and her husband lived long.

Makhanlalji confirms the view that Swami Aftab Joo was the senior *gurubhai* (spiritual brother) of Bhagavan Gopi Nathji. Bhagavanji not only visited the house of Akalalji when his Guru Zanakakji was alive but also when *yajñas* were performed in memory of him by the senior disciple.

As reported by a devotee of Swami Akalalji, namely the Sri Shivaji Matoo, a resident of Nawakadal, who once accompanied the Swami to the Kṣīr Bhavāni shrine, he witnessed a miracle. When the Swami, along with his devotees, was returning from the shrine by a *doonga* (house-boat), he unveiled his back to the inmates at Shadipur; they found visible marks of lashes on this part of his body. That was the time when the Bread Movement launched by the Kashmiri Hindus was on. The Swami then revealed that the agitating young boys were being caned mercilessly at Srinagar, and, therefore, he desired that they should reach Srinagar speedily. This incident confirms that Akalalji was in spiritual tune with the youngsters in their pain and distress. □

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

(Continued from page 539)

from which everything comes and into which everything dissolves. When it is said that *Akṣara* is *parataḥ parah*, it means that the end of our pursuit is beyond this *Akṣara* (*Hiranyagarbha*). It is more sublime than the *Akṣara*, as the Upaniṣads say, *sve mahimne pratiṣṭhitah*, established in Its own glory. When a teacher asks a student what it is that he is sitting upon, the reply given is that he is sitting on a mat which is spread on the floor, which is supported by the earth, which is set in space, which is in Atman or

Brahman, Which is established in Its own glory. The purpose of these two mantras is that of the *arundhati-darśana-nyāya*: by pointing to other bright stars near the *arundhati* star which we intend to locate, we are finally led to *arundhati*. So, on account of our limited capacity to understand, an example has been given to convey that in all that exists there is the highest common factor—Atman or Brahman.

(to be continued)

News and Reports

CENTENARY CELEBRATION OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

The celebration of the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission was inaugurated on 1 May 1997 with special puja at Balaram Mandir and at Ramakrishna Math, Belur.

After the puja at Balaram Mandir, a religious congregation presided over by Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, was held. A message from Most Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Order was read by Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj. Revered Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj gave the address of welcome. Swami Vimalatmananda (in Bengali) and Swami Bodhasarananda (in English) read out the proceedings of the meetings held on 1st and 5th May 1897. Swami Purnatmananda and Dr. Sankari Prasad Banerji spoke. Next, Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj gave the Presidential Address. Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj delivered the vote of thanks.

In the evening, a public meeting was held at 5 p.m. at Nazrul Mancha (close to Rabindra Sarovar), presided over by Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj. Dr. K.R. Narayanan, Vice-President of India, formally inaugurated the celebration. The programme highlights for the first session included: Message from Most Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Order, read by Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, welcome address by Revered Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Presidential Address by Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, inaugural address by Dr. K.R. Narayanan and vote of thanks by Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj. Swami Animeshananda presented a melodious bhajan. During the function, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, volume IX, was released by Dr. K. V. Raghunath Reddy, the Governor of West Bengal, on this memorable occasion and a copy of the book and the first volume of the *Concordance to The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* was presented to Dr. K.R. Narayanan. The second session chaired by Revered Swami Vandananandaji, a senior Trustee of the Ramakrishna Order, included speeches by

Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu, Revered Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj and Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj. A message from Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, who could not attend the function on account of ill-health, was read out. The Chairman's Address was delivered by Revered Swami Vandananandaji Maharaj. The function came to a close with devotional songs by Swami Sarvagananda and a musical presentation by the famous sitarist, Mr. Parveez Khan.

CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S RETURN TO INDIA

Sri Ramakrishna Math's marathon series of celebrations from Rameshwaram to Chennai carrying an 8-foot high image of Swami Vivekananda on a colourfully decorated chariot was reported in the April issue of *Prabuddha Bhārata*. A memorable record of the people's undying and ever-growing love, appreciation, devotion and self-surrender to a phenomenon called Vivekananda on a 90-minute (VHS) videotape is now available from Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, India.

The Ramakrishna Math and Mission centre at Bhubaneswar held a seminar on 'Swami Vivekananda and Service to Humanity' on the 23 February in which more than 200 youths from different parts of Orissa participated.

The Vivekananda College at Chennai organized a programme from 22 January to the 12 February which included a seminar on 'Swami Vivekananda's Ideas on National Reconstruction', a group discussion on 'Swami Vivekananda and Religious Resurgence', an exhibition of Swamiji's photographs, a blood donation camp, a mammoth procession, a public meeting, cultural programmes and competitions in painting, sketches, recitation, oratory and quiz. A large number of students, teachers and devotees took part in the programme.

The Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home at Chennai organized various sports competitions, a Tamil drama based on Swamiji's message and public meetings on the 8th and 9th February. Earlier, during the month of January, the centre had conducted competitions in drawing, recitation, singing, quiz, essay-writ-

ing and elocution in which 324 students from 35 schools took part.

The Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama at Kalady conducted a seminar on 'Education—Swami Vivekananda's Concept' and a public meeting at Cochin on the 22nd March in which several eminent persons took part. A large number of students, teachers and local people attended the programme.

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Ramharipur, in collaboration with Vivekananda High School, Shalbedia, conducted a meeting at the school campus on the 19th February which was attended by a large number of students, guardians and teachers.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH, CHENNAI

Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, celebrated the Centenary of its founding (23 March 1897) with a three-day programme from the 22nd to 24th March, 1997.

The Centenary Celebrations commenced on the 22nd with special puja, homa, and recounting of reminiscences by the monastic workers who had earlier worked in the Math at Chennai. There was also a visit to the 'Vivekanandar Illam' (Vivekananda House) handed over to the Chennai Math recently by the Government of Tamil Nadu, on *lease*, initially for a period of three years, for starting a museum-cum-exhibition highlighting Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings as also the high-water marks of India's cultural heritage. At this newly acquired venue, the monastic members sang *bhajan* in praise of God.

On 23 March 1997, the monks and the lay devotees participated in a day long programme. The day commenced with *mangal-arati* at 5.00 a.m. This was followed by *parikrama* (circumambulation) with the pictures of the Holy Trinity (Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda) and of Swami Ramakrishnananda at 6.00 a.m. The procession went round the premises of the Math three times accompanied by *nadasvaram*.

Throughout the day, a series of cultural programmes, such as *villupattu*, and *bhajan* by different groups—students of Sarada Vidyalaya, students of the other schools run by the Chennai Math, and music concerts, etc.—were organized. There was also a screening of the 90-minute videotape of the Centenary Celebration of the Triumphant Return of Swami

Vivekananda from the West to India which was commemorated in Tamil Nadu (from Rameshwaram on 26 January 1997 to Chennai on 15 February 1997). In the evening, there were also speeches by senior monks of the Order who came to Chennai to attend the functions held on this memorable occasion.

The curtain was brought down on the celebrations on 24 March 1997 with a pilgrimage to the centres at Kancheepuram, Malliankaranai and Chengalpattu by the monks.

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SACRAMENTO —A SHORT REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1996

The Society, located at 1337 Mission Avenue in Carmichael, Sacramento County, California (Phone: 916-489-5137; Fax: 916-489-3248) was started in 1949 as a branch of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco. Affiliated in 1952, it became an independent centre in 1970.

Swami Shraddhananda was the Swami-in-charge for 28 years till his passing on 19 July 1996 after serious illness. A largely attended funeral, worship and memorial service was held in his honour.

Swami Prapannananda, the Swami-in-charge after Swami Shraddhananda, conducted the Sunday services and Wednesday evening classes on Vedanta scriptures. The Saturday morning satsangs and the evening discourses on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature were conducted by the Swamis of the centre. Daily worship in the chapel, vesper service on Sundays and group meditation were held. Interviews were given by the Swamis to students and spiritual aspirants. Swami Prapannananda gave several lectures outside the Society, mostly in Davis and Fresno cities.

The Society has a monastery, an assembly room, a library with a reading-room and a commodious bookshop in a surrounding of beautiful gardens and a lush lawn. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda as also Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Jagaddhatri Puja, Krishna Janmashtami, Shivaratri, Christmas, etc. were celebrated with joy and solemnity. The Santodyan (The Garden of Saints) having two lovely ponds and statues of Sri Krishna, Shiva, Moses, Shankaracharya, Sri Chaitanya, St. Francis of Assisi, and Guru Nanak—a serene retreat on the rear of the property—, was extensively used by many sincere seekers for mental peace and tranquillity. □

Reviews and Notices

HINDU VIEW OF JUDAISM: By Ananda;
publ. APC Publications Ltd., 8798/7
Rani Jhansi Road, Karol Bagh, New
Delhi 110 005; 1996; pp. 299; Rs. 350/-.

Hindu View of Judaism is yet another volume that adds a note of harmony to the symphony of religious melody. The credit goes to APC Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, for ushering in this thoughtful work. Those who have read the earlier writings of 'Ananda' will not be surprised to find him dealing with Judaism and tracing its dynamics during the long history of that faith. The author has scanned this history with his unusual curiosity for the scope of spiritual development of an individual in the frame of the sacrosanct religious principles evolved by ancient sages. He has also critically measured the achievements of the members of this faith during its long history with the standards evolved by sociologists and historians.

Thus, in the third chapter of the book, the author has raised the backdrop of 'Historic Turmoils of Different Cultures and Civilizations'. The author invites the attention of readers to the fact that Israelites were first uprooted from their homeland by the neo-Babylonians early in 586 BC and twice again by Nebuchadnezzar. They were further uprooted by the Romans and were almost wiped off from the map of the world. There was no such thing as a Jewish state from 135 AD to 1948 AD, nor was there a 'national home' in the sense of a territory that was substantially Jewish in population without being under the Jewish rule. The preservation of a separate identity as a people for long eighteen centuries is a unique achievement of this tenacious community.

The author is aware of other communities—Parsees, Monophysite and Nestorian Christians as well as Greek Orthodox Christians and oft-invaded Hindus—who maintained their identities amidst heavy odds. He also accepts Toynbee's formulation of a

model of the diaspora type of community. He goes on comparing and contrasting the social, political and cultural situations faced by the various racial and religious communities and formulates his own views about their achievements. In this effort, he is aided by a number of noted authors who have studied these communities in historic perspective.

Then again, in the next chapter the author examines the concept of nationalism and universalism vis-a-vis monarchy and anarchy. This is followed by a discussion about prophets and seers and their leadership of a society. The author shows how their teachings were so similar and often close to universalism. This universalism is noticeable in Cabala, Apocrypha and Sibylla—the cornerstones of Jewish faith. All these speak of universal love. The author specifically points out how Swami Vivekananda in the historical Parliament of Religions (Chicago, 1893) proclaimed acceptance of various religions as a step towards Universalism.

In the chapter on 'Torah and Talmud', the author has compared teachings therein with those in the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. The moral precepts in the Torah are similar to those in the Hindu *Smritis*. It is said about the Talmud that it is an accumulated compilation of debates, pronouncements and decisions of the schools in Palestine and Babylonia, and it indeed is a gigantic monument of human intellect.

There are certain important chapters in the book—Historical Dialecticism, Social Action, Mysticism and Idolatry—which, though of a general nature, tell a lot about both the Hindu and the Jewish faiths. The chapter on Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes explains the opposite role played by these in the evolution of Judaism. The author mentions that for Pharisees, the Law of Moses was not a sealed book but a living dynamic guide of which not the letter but the spirit was of prime importance. This can be compared to *Mīmāṃsā* schools out of

which the entire Vedanta philosophy has been built up. The Essenes arose as a sect, purely as spiritual healers, out of the religio-political controversies of the Jews.

The author has specially taken cognisance of Love or Bhakti in Judaism and of the *jñāni* type of *sādhakas* among the Jews.

Judaism is an ancient religion and the two religions, Christianity and Islam, owe a great deal to this religion in respect of myths, rituals and philosophy. A comparative study of not only these three but of other contemporary religions is bound to have a salutary effect on the human mind as it prepares itself to face the problems of the twenty-first century.

The present volume is not a monograph on Judaism. It is a study of Judaism by a liberal Hindu—a monastic member of the Ramakrishna Order—which makes it necessarily syncretic and spiritually elevating. The broad socio-political undertaking of the author has made the study broad-based also. The book has two appendices: (1) Declaration by Reform Rabbis at Pittsburg (1885), and, (2) Religious Nationalism versus Secularity.

The book has a sombre prefatory by Amrita Rao wherein she delicately introduces the subject matter of the book and also indicates the probable purpose of the author behind his present endeavour.

The author has copiously quoted from various authorities, so much so that, sometimes these quotes throttle the author's own narration and an easy flow of his ideas. Some chapters in the book appear too remote for the subject matter of the book though an attempt has been made to fix the material at proper places. A shorter version of the book will go a long way in making it more popular. The book as it is will satisfy all inquisitive students who want to know both Hinduism and Judaism from a wider perspective.

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NYĀYAVĀRTIKATĀTPARYAṬĪKĀ by
Vachaspati Mishra; ed. Anantalal
Thakur; publ. Indian Council of Philo-
sophical Research, 1 Rajendra Bhavan,
4th Floor, 210 Deen Dayal Upadhyay
Marg, New Delhi, 110 002; 1996; pp. 709
+ xii; Rs. 800/-.

The book under review may broadly be divided into four parts: preface, original Sanskrit text, index of proper names, i.e. names of the mentionable author or works (*viśiṣṭa-nāmasūci*), and index of the original texts taken from various sacred texts like *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Muṇḍak-opaniṣad*, etc. and from various *Sūtras* and commentarial literature like *Pāṇini Sūtra*, *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra*, *Śloka-vārtika*, etc.

Vācaspati Miśra is a thinker of versatile genius who has free access to all the *Śāstras* belonging to different systems. It is very much evidenced from his monumental works in other systems like *Sāṅkhya-tattva Kaumudī*, *Bhāmati* commentary on Saṅkara-bhāṣya apart from this present one. He may be considered an encyclopedia of Indian *Śāstras*.

The author, Professor Anantalal Thakur, has done a contributive work by way of editing one of the monumental works and making it available to the scholars in the field, which presupposes his Herculean labour. This edition of the texts is not merely the repetition of the old available so far, but it offers better texts, various readings for comparison so that misconceptions of the theories can easily be removed. Apart from these, the author has taken pains to add some new items to the history of the subject for which he deserves our respect and gratitude. This has been done 'on the basis of untapped manuscripts and other connected materials'. In order to give the readers a real understanding of the Nyāya theories, the author has made 'extensive studies and searches for manuscripts' as mentioned by him in the Preface.

The author has kindly drawn our attention to the full names of some Naiyāyikas like Vātsyāyana Pakṣilasvāmin, Bharadvāja Uddyotakara, and others who are com-

monly known as Vātsyāyana, Uddyotakara, etc. in short. These full names are not known to most of the scholars in present time.

The second part, i.e. the major portion of the book, deals with the main text of *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparya-ṭikā* by Vācaspati Miśra which covers almost all the theories of Nyāya Philosophy like *Pramāṇa*, *Prameya*, *Hetvābhāsa*, *Chala*, *Samśaya*, *Atman* (Self), *Īśvara* (God), etc. Like in other philosophical texts herein too we find all the views of the opponents, like the theory of momentariness (pp. 502–22), the theory of voidness (pp. 577–80), etc. These views of the opponents have been critically adjudged and refuted carefully. There are also some philosophically significant chapters like criticism of the inferability of perception (*Pratyakṣasya-anumānatva-parīkṣā*), criticism of the 'present' as an adjunct of time (*vartamāna-kāla-parīkṣā*), consideration of self as distinct from mind (*Ātmano mano-vyatiरेkitva-prakaraṇam*), etc. which are essential for knowing the methodology of research or criticism as done by the Naiyāyikas. Different readings of the texts and editorial comments are given in the footnotes on each and every page so that a careful reader can compare them and apprehend the real meaning. It has been said by Vācaspati 'iyam-eva ca-asya-avyabhicāritā pramāṇasya' (p. 4), i.e. this is the non-deviated character of *Pramāṇa* with it. The word 'ca-asya-avyabhicāritā' has been differently read or interpreted as 'ca-ārtha-avyabhicāritā' (footnote no. 2, p. 4) which helps us to understand the real meaning, i.e. the non-deviated character of *Pramāṇa* with its object. This clear understanding of the meaning sometimes follows if the variant reading of the word and editorial notes are consulted. In the same way, the term 'na' attached to the sentence 'na ghaṭa-ādhibir-ālokaśam-yogavyaṅgair-avyabhicāra' is to be understood as 'anyathā', i.e. in the sense of otherwise, which is known from the footnote on p. 310. In another occasion, Vācaspati Miśra has taken recourse to the metaphor of illumination belonging to the lamp (*pradīpa-prakāśa*) in order to make us aware that the *Pramāṇas* are independent (*nirapekṣa*). But later it is mentioned as 'pradīpa-dṛṣṭānta' in the sense of *pradīpa-*

prakāśa-dṛṣṭānta (*saṁgrhītaḥ pradīpa-dṛṣṭānta*, etc.). That the word 'Pradīpa-dṛṣṭānta' is to be taken as 'pradīpa-prakāśa-dṛṣṭānta' is known from the different reading or comment in the footnote on p. 326. In this way, the editor has removed the ambiguities in the text by giving correct interpretation of the same. He thus removes many misconceptions in the minds of some scholars. Thorough research on various manuscripts has enabled him to give a correct interpretation, which is really a contribution to *Nyāya*.

The index of proper names (*viśiṣṭa-nāmasūcī*) and index of the original Sanskrit texts from various *Śāstras* and *sūtras* (*avatarāṇa-sūcī*) are very helpful for the scholars and researchers and hence these are really 'additions' to the book.

The book would have been more perfect if the following points had been taken care of:

First, while giving an account of the different readings or comments in the footnotes, the author has used some abbreviations like C, g, Om g, Om C, C var, K, N var, etc. which need to be explained. Otherwise, it becomes very difficult for a reader who does not know the technique of reading manuscripts and is not aware of the abbreviations. At least the author should have given the full descriptions of the symbols like Om C, C var, etc. at the beginning or end of the book for the better understanding of scholars, particularly for the beginners.

Secondly, the cover design of the book seems to be very significant. It would have been better if the significance of it were mentioned in the beginning of the book along with the name of the cover-designer.

Thirdly, the author proposes that 'the departures in the present volume, as well as in others, will be explained in the last volume' (Preface, p. viii). I believe it would be a cumbersome affair to find out the departures in the present volume by referring to the last volume. To show departures in each volume at the end of the selfsame volume would have been a simpler method as readers can readily refer to them in the same volume.

Lastly, in the *avatarāṇa-sūcī*, the abbrevia-

tions of the source-books (Sanskrit texts) are given, but not their full titles, in most of the cases: e.g. *Pra. vā.*, *Pra. samuccaya*, *Gau. dharma*, etc. which may create confusion among the scholars. Though some of the abbreviations are easily identifiable like *Pā. Sū.*, *Vai. Sū.*, *Ślo-Vā.*, etc. yet ambiguities in other cases should not have been there, as there is ample scope for giving the full names of the sources. Though the book is the result of the careful and sincere editing of Professor Thakur, a researcher or neophyte always expects a large introduction to the book so that he might have an idea of the ground for writing such a commentarial text and its philosophical significance. I personally feel the need for such an extensive introduction to this book.

In spite of these points, the work which is almost free from printing errors will occupy an important place in the history of philosophical literature. Scholars, teachers and students of Indian Philosophy in general and Nyāya in particular will be grateful to Professor Thakur who has devoted almost thirty-five years of his life to critically editing the manuscript of *Nyāyasūtras* and *Caturgranthikā*. We shall be eagerly waiting for the publication of the remaining four volumes and praying for his long life.

Dr. Raghunath Ghosh
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TIME-HONoured HINDU PRACTICES;
S.S. Gupta; publ. A. Ghosh, 5740 W. Little York, #216, Houston, Texas 77091, U.S.A.; 1996; pp. 152, Rs. 250/-, US \$18.95.

In this book the author attempts a comprehensive and scientific analysis of certain time-honoured Hindu practices. To many Indians and foreigners, the 'Hindu way of life is ritualistic, lacks science and logic and is not in the interest of its followers' (p. 11). The author believes that Hindu culture and civilization could not have survived for long if the above opinion had, indeed, been true. To the Hindu sages, the attainment of *ananda*, i.e., bliss while living, and *moksha*, i.e., salvation after death were the two goals

of life. The book deals with the achievement of *ananda* through the observance of certain 'rituals' and practices which the author proves to be scientific, rational and practical. These practices enhance the wellbeing of the body and the spirit. There is a comparative analysis with Western schools of thought. The conclusion arrived at is that the Indian sages and seers were far advanced in their thinking when they advocated the observance of those practices that led not only to *ananda*, but also to *moksha*. The book consists of ten chapters, with a bibliography and a useful index at the end. This book reiterates that ignorance about one's tradition is no excuse for condemning it, and that the Indian way of life is a unique one that needs no Western approval to survive.

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Secunderabad

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN ISLAM; S.S. Gupta; publ. A. Ghosh, 5740 W. Little York, #216, Houston, Texas 77091, U.S.A.; 1995; pp. 88; Rs. 175/-, US \$8.95.

This book attempts to question some of the basic assumptions in Islam. The author presents a direct challenge to the Muslim intelligentsia to throw light on certain contradictions and ambiguities that exist in the interpretation of the Holy Quran and the Ahadis of Islam. The author feels that true Hindu-Muslim unity can be fostered through an emotional integration of the two peoples, and not through a political pampering of the so-called minorities. This is possible only when Muslims themselves have the courage to make the Muslim masses 'aware of their ignorance of true religion, their prevalent social ills, and current political exploitation' (p. 9). Even the highly educated Muslims were often confused by the ambiguous interpretation of their religion by the Imams, Maulvis and Mullahs. The author critically analyses the concept of marriage in Islam, its dissolution, maintenance allowance, and the position of women in Islam in the light of the original statements made in the Holy Quran. The conclusion arrived at is not very pleasant. In the

chapter on 'Do's in Islam', the writer observes that the Muslim religion differentiates between Muslims and non-Muslims and even the positive 'do's' in Islam are not followed strictly by the Muslim devotees. If the Muslims 'do not abide by the Holy Quran ... then to take a stand by political leaders on less important things becomes meaningless' (p. 70).

The author's attempt to question the appropriateness of Muslim fundamentalism in a secular, democratic country like India is commendable. But the moralistic and self-righteous attitude of the writer can take

away much of what is positive in the book. The book could have also benefited if the author had comprehensively dealt with just one or two major defects in the social institutions of Islam, since the book is more in the nature of a booklet than a full-length book. Certain avoidable printing errors mar the easy readability of the text. But it is a provocative book, and one hopes that the author's well-meant criticisms are well-taken by the people concerned.

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Ramakrishna Movement: Ideas and Ideals-I

(Continued from page 512)

Hriday, who had been standing with folded hands, prostrated himself before him and wept like a disconsolate child. Tears also appeared in the eyes of Sri Ramakrishna. After the exchange of a few words, Sri Ramakrishna started to return to the temple and on the way he told 'M.', 'He tormented me as much as he served me. When my stomach trouble had reduced my body to a couple of bones and I couldn't eat anything, he said to me one day, "Look at me—how well I eat! You've just taken a fancy that you can't eat." Again he said, "You are a fool! If I weren't living with you, where would your profession of holiness be?" One day he tormented me so much that I stood on the embankment ready to give up my body by jumping into the Ganges, which was then at flood-tide.'²³

The life of Holy Mother too is an education in forbearance. When we face situations in life which appear too unbearable, a reflection on the lives of these great ones give us renewed strength. As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'The quality of forbearance is of the highest importance to every man. He alone is not destroyed, who possesses this

quality. In the Bengali alphabet no other letter occurs in three different forms except *śa*. The three forms, *śa*, *ṣa* and *sa*, all mean the same, viz., forbear.'²⁴

To these, innumerable incidents illustrative of other noble qualities such as not finding fault with others, being methodical and ever alert in the performance of work, and being not wasteful, etc., may be added from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. These point to us the way in which we ought to conduct ourselves when engaged in performing tasks in a spiritual organization. Even if it be not possible to live up to the extreme level of perfection found in their lives, yet there must be a constant endeavour and a prayerful attitude as well as a willingness to be cast in their mould. Through such whole-hearted devotion alone can one find the means to offer one's body, mind and speech in their service and become blessed by being an instrument in their hands.

(to be continued)

23. *Gospel*, p. 644.

24. Compiled by Swami Brahmananda, *Words of the Master*, Eighth edition (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1938), p. 72.